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THE WAY OF FELLOWSHIP

BY

F. W. DRAKE

PRIEST-IN-CHARGE OF S. JOHN'S, WILTON ROAD, S.W.

NEW IMPRESSION

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Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. . . . If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 S. JOHN I. 3, 7.

PREFACE

THESE papers deal with the simplicities of Catholic Faith and Practice. They are addressed to those who are living the ordered Sacramental life of the faithful Communicant. May they help towards a fuller realisation of that saintly fellowship which it is the privilege of Christ's Church to initiate, to foster, and to fulfil.

F. W. D.

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THE WAY OF FELLOWSHIP

I

THE CALL TO FELLOWSHIP.

GOD has made us for Himself. That is the secret of the Way of Fellowship. Therefore God ever claims our highest. He asks that we should love Him with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength. That is the measure of the Fellowship which He seeks. In the secret springs of will and affection, in the hidden depths of life, God seeks the steadfast response of a growing consecration. And the soul, thus aroused to the call of Fellowship, God draws ever to Himself with that unchanging love which He bears towards the least shadow of His own Divine Goodness. It is a high ideal. We need encouragement to hold it ever before our eyes. For there is no road so fraught with sorrows of disappointment, so beset with the perils of impatience and the horrors of despair, as the path of the earnest disciple who would make a whole-hearted offering of his life. Here are some marks by which we can test the reality

of our dedication and encourage ourselves in patience and in hope, as God leads us forth to the higher responsibilities of closer Fellowship.

A.

Fellowship makes a *continuous* demand upon the will. This is the "patience of the saints." This perpetual, ever-increasing effort is apt to be forgotten. There is no height of saintliness at which this struggle ceases. Ever the human will must be strained up to conformity with the Will of God. The life of every saint reveals the unbroken continuance of a conscious, painstaking obedience, which can never become so habitual as to cease to make a fresh demand upon the will. It is a painstaking, not a painful, obedience. It is an obedience of happiness and of joy, but always a fresh-willed obedience, not simply the outcome of habit, but the exercise of a new power of determination. For to love God is to bend the *will* consciously in ways of conformity and obedience. The will is the controlling element in our personality. It is that in which we are likest God, the attribute which marks us off from the rest of His creation. Here in the will the soul sees the image of God. Every act of God is instinct with will. And our acts, too, if they are to be the acts of our whole personality, must be conscious acts of will. William Law has not understated the principle of the devout life when he says it consists in the "*intention to please God* in every act as the

happiest and best thing in the world." We must, therefore, put our wills to school, discipline, control, subdue, direct them aright, and see that every act is a deliberate exercise of will, not a mere act of impulse, nor of habit only, not a mere happening into which we have drifted. Listlessness and disappointment creep over our spiritual life as soon as we lose the sense of joy which comes from the daily exercise of this strength of will. It is here that our fellowship fails. It lacks renewal and becomes a memory of the past, instead of an energy of the present. If we purpose to serve God truly, let us be prepared for the constant taking of fresh pains, the daily renewal of our dedication. This is not the exception, but the rule, of discipleship. No nearness to Christ, however great the joy and sweetness which it brings, can absolve us from this constant effort, this continual devotion. The proof of our love is not the high emotion, not the ecstatic rapture, not the holy aspiration, not even the notable success, but the persistent, daily resolve to do God's Will. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

B.

Fellowship with God means a hidden life. To some this may seem a truism. Perhaps it is. Yet it needs to be emphasised. For we English people have a peculiar dislike of contemplation, and spurn the ways of quiet thought. We love activity, we love to cultivate all that calls for energy, all that makes for evident

success, and produces immediate, tangible results. And this temper of mind invades our spiritual life. We are apt to value our devotion, to estimate its reality, to judge of its fruitfulness and worth, by the way in which it prepares us for some kind of religious activity. We regard it not as a good thing, as the best thing, *in itself*, but only as a means to secure this or that outward result. It is the outward activity in religious service which we regard as the sure mark of fellowship and devotion. Now it is perfectly true that many of us are indeed called to a life of religious activity, and are privileged to take part in a manifold round of brotherly and unselfish service. It is true that such energy of service can only be sustained and be preserved pure and undefiled where there is a life of hidden devotion. But that hidden life itself, in itself and by itself, apart from all outward activities, is the highest thing we have, is the real dedication, is in itself the crown of our spiritual achievement. Behind and beneath the vocation to this or that service is the vocation to holiness. The call to individual consecration is always the prior vocation for every soul. We are called to *be* holy, before we are called to *do* the things which befit a holy life.

And may it not be that sometimes we reverse the order of vocation? We must not expect to discover our vocation to service before we have responded to the vocation to holiness. When the thought of God's call stirs afresh in our hearts, let us begin with

the certainty that the first call is indeed to sanctification. And if God seems to withhold the revelation of our individual call to service, and even for a while to cut us off from some of our wonted activities, it may be that He holds out to us a new opportunity of realising that first vocation to personal holiness and interior dedication. And there are some for whom this vocation is the only call of God revealed in this life. It is enough to satisfy the desires of the most strenuous disciple of the Cross, if it be willingly and heartily accepted as the first work, the greatest happiness of life.

If some are wrongly inclined to measure their acceptance of Fellowship by the fulness of outward activity, there are others who would gauge its reality by the conscious fervour and sensible joy of their spiritual life. This is perhaps the greatest temptation that ever besets us in our earnestness. Our demands seem so reasonable. We love God. We worship Him. We seek Him in His appointed ways of sacramental fellowship. Is it too much to expect that we should have, not the ecstatic rapture of the great saints, but at least a real consciousness of God's Presence, a realised sense of happiness at the moments of His revelation? This natural expectation is one of Satan's deadliest weapons for the overthrow of the soul's peace. We have to learn that the life of fellowship is a *hidden* life indeed. The experiences of the soul in its communion with God

are carried on in a sphere too deep and profound to be measured by the emotional sensations which satisfy us in the ordinary intercourse of human life. The life of the soul, in its inner depths, is a life of tranquillity. Where God the Infinite touches our finite powers there is serene, unruffled peace. We walk by *faith* and not by sight. To walk by sight would be to have the conscious rapture, the realised joy, the brightness of the unclouded vision. But we walk by faith. We *know*, it is our certain conviction, that at those high moments of God's approach, His grace is assuredly given, and our souls are strengthened, purified, and enriched by the access of new powers of holiness. Though we cannot *feel* the joy of that gift, the gift lies there in the secret treasure-house of our personality. And we *know* that when the temptation has to be withstood, when the witness for God has to be given, when the unselfish service must be rendered, then, though we do not *feel* as though we had the power, yet, by an act of will, out of the depths of grace hidden in the subconscious treasuries of the soul, we can raise up to the level of conscious and realised experience just that very power of obedience, holiness, and service which we need.

So we learn to measure the reality of our fellowship not by the conscious feelings which we enjoy, but by the persistent, lowly obedience with which we receive God's gifts of grace. Patiently, thankfully, and cheerfully to plod along the quiet way of obedient

and faithful reception of the sacraments of God's grace—this is our acceptance of the Divine Fellowship, this is the measure of our dedication and the safeguard of our peace.

C.

Our first response to God's call for Fellowship has its own glowing fervours and high enthusiasm which can never be recalled. The ardour of that first love carries us triumphantly through the initial difficulties of the way. But as day succeeds to day and the demand upon the will continues, the monotony of the struggle brings new dangers and temptations, terrible often just in proportion to our very earnestness. The way of devotion becomes indeed the way of the Cross.

First, there is the danger of *formalism* and *externality*. We know that we must make rules for ourselves; we must have method in our spiritual life; we must be definite; we must bind our wills to the punctual performance of duties. So we make our rules, rules not carelessly nor lightly accepted, but the outcome of deliberate thought and anxious care, the result of reliance upon the inspiration of the Spirit. Thus we bind ourselves to the renewal and quickening of many a habit that has become dulled in our life of devotion. And such careful and earnest purpose is sure to receive the blessing of God. Yet here, in the very heart of our spiritual discipline, there lurks a subtle danger. We must be very careful

that our rules do not, in the end, drive out that very spirit of reality and devotion which they are meant to cherish and enrich. It is possible to keep a rule in the letter, to maintain an unbroken external obedience, and yet to break and destroy the very spirit which the rule was made to embody. We must not keep the rule just for the rule's sake, and let it become a matter of personal pride and a source of shallow self-satisfaction. But we must make, and we must keep, our rules for God's sake, out of love for our Blessed Lord. We shall fast, not only because it is the rule of the Church, not only because it is a natural expression of our sense of sin, but out of love for our Lord, that by some voluntary action of our own we may unite ourselves to Him in His suffering. We shall give more earnest attention to our prayers, not simply because we have made a rule to do so, but because we do really want to hold ourselves in closer conformity to His blessed Will, and to enter more fully into the mind of Christ, and to take our share in that redemptive intercession, which is the privilege of His saints. We shall give alms in more unselfish ways, because we have gained more of the self-sacrificing, self-emptying spirit of the Incarnate. Always, therefore, in the keeping of our rules there must be the fresh act of faith, the new impulse of love, the quickened act of will, always the conscious dedication, the renewed sense of God's Presence, the peaceful reliance upon His daily help.

Next, there is the danger of *impatience*. Impatience is one of the most subtle forms of pride. At all stages of spiritual growth it lies in wait for us. First, we are impatient at our rate of progress and our poor attainment. That leads us to make for ourselves rules too hard and too impossible for our present strength. We watch the progress of others and think we ought to be doing all that they can do Yet we are really behind them, and must go patiently and lead ourselves on gently. It is very hard to mark the line between indulgence and the gentleness which comes from true self-knowledge. Because we are humble with ourselves now, it does not mean that our ideal is not high enough. But just because it is so high, we know that we must rise to it slowly step by step, and each step will be fully secured and safely maintained before we move on to the next. In whatever we have already attained, we must secure absolute reality, lest we be found to build upon a false foundation.

Again, impatience besets us when we fail to fulfil the hopes we had of holier fellowship and fall back into the old sin which we thought we had left. It is our self-love that is wounded and our self-will, when we feel such sullen disquietude at our repeated falls. For even our sin is not to make us discouraged or over-anxious if we are really trying to do better. We expect too much of ourselves and too little of God, for we think that we are already above that sin and

we fail to accept the full truth of God's offered pardon. There are stings of conscience and feelings of remorse which are not of God but of the devil, though they seem to come from God. By their fruits they shall be known. If they humble us, if they make us ready for loving service, if they lead us to throw ourselves at once into the arms of God's love, then we may thankfully receive them as from God. But if they make us fearful, hesitating, slothful, and utterly dismayed, and leave us morose and sullen at our repeated failure, then let us flee from them as from the wiles of the evil one. Perhaps never so much as at the moments of our highest effort, do our faithful, persevering souls, toiling along the upward path amid so many difficulties, need the comfort which the pastoral insight of Scupoli offers in these words: "Take this rule, whenever you fall into a fault, be it great or small, though you may have committed the same four thousand times in a day, and always voluntarily, never allow yourself to fall into a state of morose bitterness, and do not be disquieted, nor waste your time in self-examination, but at once acknowledge what you have done, and *humbly regarding your own weakness, turn lovingly to God* and say, 'Lord, this have I done, being what I am, and naught else could have been expected of me, save these and like faults. Nor should I have stopped where I did, had not Thy goodness lifted me up and continued with me. I thank Thee for that from

which Thou hast saved me. I grieve for what I have done. Pardon me and give me grace never to offend Thee more. May nothing ever part me from Thee, Whom I desire ever to serve and to obey.' Then, do not waste time in anxious thoughts, imagining that the Lord has not forgiven you, but in a spirit of faith and peace, continue your prayer and work, as if you had not fallen at all. And this you must do, not only once, but a hundred times if it be needed, and always with the same confidence and peace the last time as the first. For so you will do great honour to the goodness of God, Whom you are bound to conceive as All-gracious and Infinite in Pity beyond all that you can imagine."

And a third great danger is *self-consciousness*. This shows itself, when we are earnest, in a strange disregard of others' happiness. Effort makes some people so angular, so difficult, so awkward with others. Only great hearts can be really generous. Never is generosity needed so much as in a time of special spiritual effort. The very endeavour to hold ourselves in control in one direction drives us to exaggeration in another. All our energies are taken up with the task of self-mastery. So great is the task that we want almost to be alone. In the company of others we are easily ruffled. And sometimes when we feel we are keeping our rules well, a sense of self-satisfaction creeps over us, which is very nearly as ugly and dangerous as the coarser forms of pride. We

become very hard to others, while we want every convenience prepared for ourselves. The work of self-mastery is so important that the concerns of all others must bend before our needs. What is the remedy for this? The remedy for self-consciousness is always God-consciousness. We are forgetting God. We forget Him first in our own lives. For we are really trying to work in our own strength, forgetting that the work of Fellowship in our souls is God's work, not our own. We have just to give ourselves up to Him and to let His grace work in us. We are too effortful, too anxious, too reliant upon our own energies of will and emotion. It is God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. And, secondly, we forget His work in others. The Spirit of God works in different ways in different souls. Each soul is of value as great as mine. Never ought I to be so conscious of the value of all other souls as when in growing penitence I bow before the Cross and adore the wonder of their redemption. Never must I be so loving, so gentle, so patient, so winning in my ways. Let that be the test of my growing surrender. Does it take me out of myself? Does it make me live in God? Does it make me more tender of others for whom Christ died? The world watches us in our growing fellowship, not unkindly, but wistfully, expectantly, with an infinite hunger at its heart, and a pathetic hope that when it sees us at our best, there may dawn upon its gaze a vision of beauty so

attractive, so unearthly, so compelling, that it can no longer withhold its allegiance, but must itself be taken captive by the love of God, and enter humbly on that way of Fellowship which has ever been its high destiny in the Heart of the Eternal.

D.

Such a Fellowship of love is *the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Sometimes we miss the joy of our Fellowship and the fulness of our dedication, because we try to earn it or win it by ourselves. We do not allow enough for the free grace of God's loving gift. We do not *rest* enough in God. God's love is the secret of our happy fellowship. If we need a new motive to make us listen to the call to Fellowship, we shall find it in the certainty of God's love. Let us think less of our own love for God and dwell always on God's love for us. Let us throw ourselves out upon the certainty of God's love, and we shall lose that clinging self-consciousness which spoils so much of our religion. Let each day begin with a simple act of faith in the love of God, and the atmosphere of God's love will surround us all the day. Whatever happens, God's love is the one thing each day which we will never allow ourselves to question. That is the pivot on which life hinges: that is the light which is to irradiate every dark corner; that is the driving power of our enthusiasm, the secret of our peace, the certainty of our happiness. And there is no fear as

to the response of love which such a consciousness of God's love will quicken in our life. Our prayers will glow with a new power, because they are not so much the conscious effort of our response of love to God, but rather the realising of God's love for us, our entering into His purposes of love for us and for others, the offering of our wills to co-operate with His Will of love. And every moment, whether of difficulty, anxiety, or joy, will bear its own message of God's love. Beneath the squalor and meanness of the most miserable conditions of life, we shall detect the quiet workings of God's love, the lowly adjustment of the infinite resources of Divine pity to the needs of sinful men, God's unceasing appeal for Fellowship. There will be no failure in our response to His call, while we thus keep the certainty of His love before us day by day. We cannot fail to love Him while we remember that He first loved us.

II

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

THE Fellowship with God for which we were made is first communicated to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Blessed Spirit is above all else the Spirit of Fellowship. In the eternal Fellowship of the Blessed Trinity, the Spirit is the bond of mutual union, and when His work is revealed to us in the things of time, He is still the Spirit of Union both in Creation and in Redemption. The title, "Spirit of Grace," points at once to the conditions under which we have gained our chief knowledge of His working. We know Him best as the Minister of Christ, showing to us the Things of Jesus, extending to us the work of the Incarnation. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the Incarnate. So necessarily and so intimately is the work of the Spirit for us bound up with the revelation of Christ, that in most of his short phrases of epistolary greeting, St. Paul deems it sufficient to mention distinctly only the first two Persons of the Blessed Trinity. "Grace and Peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The mention of the grace of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ, carries with it the implicit recognition of the Blessed Spirit, through Whom alone the grace of the

Incarnation is shed abroad in the hearts of men. The Holy Ghost is the Minister of Grace. In that Fellowship with God, which is created by grace, the Spirit is the prime mover and first agent. It is He Who first brings us into fellowship with God. He is the Finger with which God touches us. So S. Basil of old recognised when, in the first great treatise ever written on the Holy Spirit, he said, "The way of the knowledge of God is *from* one Spirit, *by* the one Son, *to* the one Father." While in the historical order of God's revelation of Himself to man the Blessed Spirit is the last to be made known, in the actual order of our own human experience He comes first. He is our first point of contact with God. That is why S. Paul, ever alert to the practical corollaries of theological truth, generally adopts the order of our spiritual experience, and when he speaks of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, mentions the Blessed Spirit first. Thus in the Epistle to the Corinthians the order is, "The same Spirit—the same Lord—the same God." And in the letter to the Ephesians, "One Spirit—one Lord—one God and Father of all." Thus the Spirit comes first in our experience of the life of Fellowship.

B.

The ways of the Divine Approach to man have always been ways of lowliness and condescension. At the Creation, God limited the immediate exercise

of His own sovereign Will by the gift of freewill to man. In the mystery of the Virgin Birth and the life of human limitation, which Christ accepted, the same lowliness is revealed. And as the Spirit of the Incarnate, the Holy Ghost naturally conforms to, applies and carries forward the very methods of humility which Jesus revealed in His Incarnation. The sacrifice shown in Creation, the condescension of the Incarnate Life, are repeated in the humility of the Holy Indwelling, which the Holy Ghost assumes in the very heart of weak and sinful humanity. It is, indeed, as S. Peter says, the Spirit of Glory and of God that rests upon us. The Glory is veiled, and it is a God that hideth Himself. Devout thought can recognise how truly the full glory of the Divine Spirit is "straitened" within us, until the Will of God be fully accomplished in our lives. Paradise will show the growing glory of that Divine Indwelling. Heaven alone will reveal its unveiled beauty and imperishable power.

As the very principle of the Incarnation is the hallowing of the material for the uses of the spirit, so the ministries of the Blessed Spirit now perpetuate the life of grace by the means of outward sacraments. Before the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit had been ever at work in humanity. Man had been made for happy and sinless fellowship with the Blessed Spirit. But in sinful man the Spirit could find no foothold for permanent abiding. Here and

there elect souls responded to the quickening inspiration of the Spirit, but there could be no indwelling, until Christ's perfect human nature had provided in man himself a worthy abiding home for the Spirit of Holiness. Then the Spirit, which had ever been *with* man, could find a place *in* man. As our Lord had promised, "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Thus the Indwelling is assured by the outward Sacrament of Baptism, and sealed in all the fulness of Divine strength by the Sacrament of Confirmation. Influences quick and effectual, manifold inspiration, impulses, promptings of the Holy Spirit there may be in other ways according to God's loving Will and the bounty of His uncovenanted mercies. But permanent, abiding indwelling, with the chartered certainty of the Blessed Spirit's continual Presence and the assured gift of Sonship, can be by Baptism alone. That is the way of the Incarnation.

C.

We need to recall the ever-quickening powers of the Holy Spirit's Indwelling. The very humility of His Presence is one cause of our forgetfulness. And when we do make ourselves think of it, the very marvel of it almost overwhelms our faith. His Indwelling is indeed one of those gifts that pass man's understanding, which God in this world has prepared for those that love Him. Mostly we are weak because we will not realise the Sonship of

Baptism as a permanent and actual fact in our lives. The Holy Spirit comes, not as a temporary inspiration, a momentary impulse, but as a permanent abiding tenant of the soul. "He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." Coming into our souls before the full dawn of conscious life, the Spirit provides the atmosphere of holiness in which the first motions of our will may be shaped, in which the earliest aspirations of the heart may be moulded and the tendencies of thought and mind rightly directed. But ever it is a humble indwelling. The Spirit's Presence is God's closest and most effective appeal to man, but always an appeal, never a compulsion, always an interior attraction working from within, never an external domination. And so subtly is the influence of the Blessed Spirit interfused, so intimately is it interwoven with the promptings and impulses of the natural man, that it is hard to say where nature ends and grace begins. An old saint has expressed the great truth of the Indwelling of God in our souls in memorable words. "Worshipfully," says Lady Julian, "He sits within our souls, for in us is His homeliest home and His endless dwelling." "Worshipfully," because He ever respects the dignity of each human soul; "His homeliest home," because for His Fellowship we were made; "His endless dwelling," because He abides in us eternally, leading us on by sure processes of gradual sanctification to full and perfect bliss. To recognise

the truth of His Indwelling, the certainty of His Fellowship, is to be equipped with power to meet all the trials and dangers of life. We must not expect to realise it by any evident consciousness of strength, by any happy feeling beforehand of being adequate to meet temptation or any emotional sense of spiritual ecstasy. At times, doubtless, the rapture of the Spirit's Presence may carry us away and lift us up beyond the sense of difficulty or the fear of defeat. But this is not the rule of our religious experience. Normally it is by faith and not by sight that we walk. And we have, bereft indeed of all *sense* of strength, to throw ourselves back upon the sheer certainty that we do actually possess already within us that victorious power, the stirrings of which we cannot yet feel, but the reality of which will be evidenced the moment that we call its unfelt forces into play, and put them into vigorous exercise. It is the arm yet withered that God asks us to stretch forth, and in the obedient stretching forth of the arm, out of the very misery of its powerlessness, its actual power is realised. To start the day, therefore, with an act of deep faith in the certainty and power of the Spirit's Indwelling, to recall the reality of that Presence in the face of each temptation, or opportunity of service, as it comes, is to brace ourselves with courage for all our needs, and to assure for ourselves victory and daily increase in the Holy Spirit.

Daily increase in the Holy Spirit means steady development of all the powers of our personality according to the purpose of God for our perfection. For it is only by the Spirit's fellowship that we can attain to that ideal of individual character which God has marked out for each one of us. It has been said of us that we are born originals, but die copies. Our individuality, in all the wealth of its manifold possibilities and original genius, can only be truly developed along the line of co-operation with the indwelling Spirit. Most of us are conscious of a self that is strangely divided, the seat of strangely contrary impulses, the battle-ground of warring passions. Unity of purpose, singleness of aim, harmony of movement, are needed for the development of character. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring peace to the soul, to reconcile the conflicting impulses of the life, to satisfy the multitudinous longings of the heart and to achieve the unifying of all the faculties of the personality. This is the perpetual influence of the Holy Spirit, enriching all the powers of the life, fructifying all its energies, quickening all its activities, so that "we all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit."

It is not hard for us to-day to realise more fully than our forefathers the wide range of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. For Personality means so

much more to us than it did to them. We have learned that there are regions of our personality which lie too deep for fully conscious recognition. We are taught that there is the subconscious tract of our personal life, which lies below the threshold of our sensible experience. The impulses that stir, the movements that originate in that deep sphere of life may be beyond the range of our accurate definition or certain detection. But we know that they exist. The revelations of modern psychology open out to us a new and wonderful field for reverent speculation. For we can be sure that over all the regions of our personal life, conscious or subconscious, the Holy Spirit may hold full and rightful sway. And it may be an added encouragement to our faith to realise that the life of the Spirit in man is too deep, and touches too profound a region, for us to be ever fully conscious here of the extent of His working in us. He works at the very heart and centre of our personality, in a sphere too deep, too tranquil in its unruffled calm, for our surface emotions or our shifting moods and sensations to be the conscious measure of His presence and His power. Heaven alone will effect the entire emergence into realised and fully conscious experience of all those powers of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, which here have been so largely subconscious, and therefore so much a matter of faith.

In one direction, especially, is it of help to recall

the subconscious work of the Holy Spirit. In our life of prayer there are times when we must rely almost entirely on the Advocacy of the indwelling Spirit to voice our praises and to utter our petitions. And this is an advocacy which we can only realise by faith. To rely upon the Spirit for this ministry requires a profound oblation of the will.

There are times when our usual habits of prayer become impossible. Severe illness or advancing infirmities of age may bring decay of memory or impair our powers of concentration of thought. This necessitates a change in our method of devotion. Sometimes a spiritual lassitude or lethargy, often the sequel of some great strain or some great sorrow, seems to take away our ordinary power of prayer. Then it is, in those moments of great crisis, that we can fall back upon the indwelling Spirit, Who "helpeth our infirmities" by voicing those groanings which it is beyond our unaided power to utter. Then in all simplicity and faith we can cease attempting the usual verbal prayers to which we are accustomed, and our prayer consists in a full oblation of the will to God, with a definite act of faith in the power of the Spirit to undertake for us the expression of our prayer. Thus we may rest in God in the very midst of our infirmity and weakness, and know that through the merits of our Blessed Advocate in Heaven our devotion is presented before the Throne of the Father by the Divine Advocate Who dwells

within our hearts, the pledge of our unbroken Fellowship with God. It is natural that this higher form of mental prayer which relies so faithfully upon the inner work of the Holy Spirit should be hard for many to realise, but to those who can thus stir up the gift that is within them, this ministry of the Holy Spirit is of inexpressible comfort.

D.

The Church of God, as the great Spirit-bearing Body, is the ideal of human fellowship. The possession of the same indwelling Spirit is an actual link which binds souls together in the reality of an eternal union. Just as in the days of His earthly Ministry, the sacred Humanity of our Blessed Lord was inspired by the Holy Spirit given to Him without measure, so the Church, which is His mystical Body to-day, is quickened by the same Spirit of Fellowship and bound together by His indwelling in an inviolable unity. In all the ministrations of the Church, the Spirit pursues His one work of Fellowship. The Sacraments of New Birth, of Spiritual Strength, of Reconciliation, of Holy Communion are all acts in which the Spirit links the soul of man afresh to God. The nature of His work may be most clearly seen in the greatest Sacrament of all, the Sacrament of the Altar. There in that greatest offering of the whole Church, the Spirit of Fellowship has a twofold part to play. He consecrates

both us who offer and the gifts which we present. It is He Who places in our hands the very Offering which we plead. There is a beautiful phrase which finds a place in the Liturgies of the East. After the Consecration, the priest elevates the Blessed Gifts with the words, "Holy things for holy men." It is the visitation of the Spirit that has consecrated the creaturely elements and has made them the Body and Blood of Christ. It is the Presence of the Blessed Spirit which has given to men the power of holy approach.

And we cannot forget that it is His Indwelling which has made us Sons of God and given to us that frank, glad approach of filial assurance and radiant love. It is the very right and privilege of all the Baptised always to join in the Offering of the Church in the Blessed Eucharist. Perhaps we think chiefly of the personal holiness with which His Presence endows us, so that we are made worthy to approach, prepared to offer with clean hands and pure hearts. But we must think less selfishly than that and widen our horizon at such a moment. The purging and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit does not aim solely at the consecration of the individual. The real object of all personal holiness is not selfish, but it is to enhance the perfection and the purity of the Offering of the whole Body. And the Body, the Church, makes the great Offering, not selfishly, but vicariously and prophetically, as representative of all

that the whole of mankind can be and shall be. It is the Holy Spirit Who in that whole Body, as the Offering is made, is the hidden, pervasive, divine indwelling Power Who pleads, making intercession, helping human infirmity with groanings that cannot be uttered. He is the indwelling Advocate, abiding in the Body for ever according to Christ's promise. And as it was through the Eternal Spirit that the Son offered Himself without spot to God, His Sinless Humanity being equipped for its perfect obedience by the Holy Ghost, so it is through the inspiration and indwelling of that same Eternal Spirit that we sinful men are able to plead that Sacrifice, and, under cover of that perfect Offering, to offer our own selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice. Recognition of this special work of the Holy Spirit will add strength and assurance and joy to every Eucharist. And as the Blessed Spirit both prepares us for the Heavenly Feast and Himself spreads the Banquet for our humble partaking, it is easy to see how the very Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is indeed, according to the words of the old prayer, a "Communion of the Holy Ghost." For it is the receiving of that perfect Humanity which is not only inspired by the Holy Spirit without measure, but has also been glorified in fullest majesty by the Eternal Spirit. The Blessed Eucharist is, therefore, always to the faithful soul the quickening of all the activities of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the increase of the grace

of His sevenfold gifts, the ripening of the manifold fruit of His indwelling, the purifying of that body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, the rousing and cleansing of all the faculties of the soul to a more ready and radiant response to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit of Fellowship.

III

THE ALTAR OF FELLOWSHIP

THE Altar of God is the sacred trysting-place of Jesus with His own, the very shrine of Fellowship. The Blessed Sacrament is the strongest and most permanent bond of unity between men.

A.

And this unity is the natural corollary of two great truths which the Holy Eucharist exemplifies.

The first truth is that *each Eucharist is the Offering of the Whole Body of the Church.* There is no such thing as an isolated, a lonely Eucharist. Each Eucharist, however small the congregation present, is the offering not of one Priest only, not of a few faithful souls, but of the whole Body. The Priest is the Priest not of the congregation, but of the whole Church, and through its Priests at every Eucharist it is the whole Church that offers. This is a wonderfully uplifting truth. For as we conceive of the Priests in the Mission Field, with their small congregations scattered in the far-off places of the world, we see a new dignity added to their Eucharistic Sacrifice. It is not the offering only of those few faithful souls, gathered so painfully out of the darkness of Heathendom, but it is the offering of

the united fellowship of the Church — the one common Act in which the whole Body takes part. Nor can the happy dead be excluded from this fellowship. The Land of Paradise cannot be forgotten. Surely even there Sacrament in some sort must reign until the full and unveiled Vision of God be granted and Heaven begin—the Lord's death must be shown forth "until He come." And whatever be the method of their Sacramental approach, in whatever way it be that the souls in Paradise continue their offering of the All-Atoning Sacrifice, it is not in loneliness, not apart from us that the worship of Paradise is offered. It is the Offering of the whole Church. As we offer upon the earthly Altar, they join with us, and in the ineffable and unknown mysteries of the worship of Paradise, we too have our share. Always it is the whole Body that offers.

The second truth which underlies the unity is that *each Eucharist is the reception of the One Sacred Humanity of Christ.* This means the explicit rejection of all those low and unworthy ideas of the Sacrament which are represented by the teaching of those who regard the Eucharist as a bare memorial of the death of Christ. The Eucharist is not merely a memorial-feast, no bare remembrance either of the agony or of the victory of Christ. It is not merely an act by which we pledge our own common faith in His atoning redemption. Such a love-feast would be indeed a beautiful expression of unity and a mark of common

sympathy, but it is no new, fresh, vital act of deepening fellowship. Such a service would be a movement of spiritual sympathy, a sentimental *rapprochement*, an effort towards a link with the past, but could afford no really new and permanent bond of unity.

But Holy Communion, as the reception of the One Sacred Humanity of Christ, is a real act of fellowship, a new strengthening of ties, a fresh participation in life, a real increase of common love, as our union with Christ Himself in actual fact becomes more real and perfected. Thus the sacred power of that Communion, the grace of that Eternal Life, will break down the barriers of nature and of social convention which separate heart from heart. One Presence, quickening, purifying, strengthening, glorifying all with its grace, will bind all together. As we go forth from the Altar we shall see Christ in each other. We shall look to see what God Himself sees in each of us. We shall so dwell on that Presence that all other things fade into insignificance. That is what really tells. We can look away from the faults we know to the one common Life which has begun a new work of Sanctification. As we have known the all-conquering power of that Grace in our own hearts, we shall trust the working of that Sacred Humanity also in the hearts of others. Thus are we bound afresh together in a real Unity of Love in the Blessed Sacrament. The Unity which begins for us at the Font is perfected at the Altar.

So is it with the Departed. The centre of Unity is here at the Altar. Christ's Sacred Humanity is the bond. The same life is filling them. They are not omnipresent. They are creatures only, they have not burst the bonds of finite human nature though they be quickened in spirit. But they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." He is the centre of their life. In His Humanity we are linked with their deepening life. It is not a vague spirit-world, whose forces are indeterminate and incapable of precise and actual application to our lives. The powers of their intercession, their worship, their penitence, their praise, their growing glory, which are all the fruits of Christ's grace, are actually apprehended by us in Christ, are definitely ours in the Communion of the Altar. As we make the Sacred Humanity of Christ our own in the blessed intimacies of the Holy Eucharist, we appropriate all those powers of the unseen world. As at that sacred tryst we place our hands in the pierced Hands of our Redeemer, in the hollow of that sacred grasp we touch the hands of our dear ones who live in His nearer Presence. There is no surer intimacy, no closer fellowship, no more abiding mutual joy than that.

Yes, the Eucharist is the one *permanent and universal bond of fellowship.* It would be possible to describe the history of the world, the progress from savagery to civilisation, as the search after an enduring fellowship. Man is always struggling towards union,

seeking a stable bond of brotherhood. But in all the ancient systems of society there was decay, decadence, no true basis of unity. God Himself could find in man no foundation of permanent unity: everywhere the forces of disintegration and disunion prevailed, until in the Spirit-filled and sinless Humanity of the Incarnate was at length found the long-sought organ of Unity and Eternal Fellowship. Here is a Unity which survives all political separation, which transcends all differences of race and country and bursts the barriers of time. The Eucharist, as the extension of the Incarnation, applying the same One Sacred Humanity to the needs of age after age, is at each moment a new power of fellowship, a perpetually active bond of union whereby the brotherhood of the Saints is ever being perfected. It is the Altar of enduring Fellowship.

B.

There are three places in our Communion Service where the thought of fellowship is very definitely expressed in actual words—in the Prayer for the Church, in the Prayer of Oblation, and in the Thanksgiving. And each brings into prominence a different aspect of Fellowship.

(1) There is the *Fellowship of Prayer.* When we "make prayers and supplications and thanksgivings for *all men*," when we bless God for those that are departed this life in His faith and fear, and pray that

we with them may be partakers of His heavenly kingdom, we recognise that we are linked with the Departed in the Fellowship of Prayer. No need is there at this moment to enlarge on that which is so familiar and so happy a truth. Our own prayers are deepened by the remembrance that the prayers of Paradise, which rise for us there in the fellowship of the Body, are prayers which have a greater efficacy in virtue of their growing unselfishness, their deeper insight into God's Will, their greater holiness. And as there are no prayers so effectual and availing as those which are offered with the pleading of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, so we realise that our own prayers are most like theirs, and our fellowship of Prayer is truest, at the Altar.

(2) There is *Fellowship of Penitence.* In the Prayer of Oblation we ask that "we and *all Thy Whole Church* may obtain *remission of our sins* and all other benefits of His Passion." This opens to our view the Penitence of Paradise. In that ever-growing spirit of deep penitence which marks the souls in Paradise, they are increasingly bound more closely to us in this special way, that they attain to that wonderful power of penitence for *corporate* sins of the whole Body which it is so difficult for us to reach. Here, because of the pressure of our own individual sins, even the best of us must keep our penitence very much to ourselves; we find it difficult, on the one hand, to express our individual

penitence in such a way that the whole Body may take some open share in it, and, on the other hand, difficult also to realise sorrow for the sins which are not actually our own, but are the sins of the whole corporate Body. Our penitence here can never be vicarious, but through the mercy of Christ it can have redemptive power, leading others to penitence. When I repent, all the whole Church must feel the impulse of holiness which my true penitence gives. As the souls in Paradise receive through the merits of the All-atoning Passion the perfect remission of their sins, each step in forgiveness is a quickening of penitence, individual and corporate. And as Christ Himself, in the wonderful conception of Dr. Moberly, has been called the only perfect Penitent, because He is alone sinless, so we can understand how those who are growing the more fully in Holiness become themselves increasingly capable of a more perfect and more corporate Penitence. Thus there is a real fresh Fellowship through the spirit of Penitence in the Eucharist. For the gift of Communion does not merely bring grace to hearts that are prepared with diligent penitence for Christ's coming, but it is an actual Remission of Sins, an access of Holiness, and therefore adds a gift of a new power of penitence, linking us on more closely to the wonderful Penitence of Paradise, quickening our union with the fellowship of all the Saints.

(3) There is also the *Fellowship of Life in the*

Body. In the Prayer of Thanksgiving we thank God that as the result of the gift of the Eucharist, we have gained a new power as very members incorporate in the mystical Body of His Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people. That is the quickening of the one Life within us, which is Christ Himself. It is a real increase of the power of life and fellowship through the reception of the Body and Blood of the one Christ, leading to a new realisation of corporate fellowship and a new energy of activity within the Body, by which we are enabled to continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as God has prepared for us to walk in. It is a present fellowship of life and glory. It is not a gift of life handed down, like the flaming brand in the old torch races, from hand to hand to successive runners, but a present participation in actual life enjoyed and shared by all alike at the same time. Every quickening of the life of holiness in the Church beyond the veil has its influence on the life of the struggling Church below. Every Eucharist is a present fellowship of life which quickens the energies of the whole Body.

C.

There are very practical ways in which we may apply to our preparation and to our Communion these thoughts of fellowship at the Altar.

(1) The Altar is the *Altar of Intercession.* Let us

approach the Throne of Grace in the spirit of true fellowship with others. We come too often with only our own needs. Our deadness in devotion at the Eucharist is in part due to our selfishness. Let us bring others with us in spirit and plead their need. Whole classes of workers there are, who can seldom come to the Eucharist. Thousands do not know what it means. Hundreds know, but do not care. Let us bring these with us. We can have a definite plan of intercession by which we do not come lonely to the Eucharist. We will not leave our intercession unprepared, but, as part of our preparation for Communion, we shall know distinctly and definitely whose needs we are to bear in Remembrance. And we shall know for certain that such intercession is a real work of fellowship, and has its immediate and sure effect on the lives of those for whom we have thus pleaded the all-sufficient Sacrifice.

(2) It is the *Altar of Hope*. We must come with the highest ideals of what is possible for ourselves. We have a high part to play in the life of holy Fellowship. Reflecting upon the cloud of witnesses, recalling the victories of the Saints and the marvellous sanctification of life which we have actually seen in others, we renew our own ideal of saintliness as we approach the Altar. We know well where we have failed. But we know also where grace is to be found. Here, we know, God waits to give just that spirit of love, humility, courage, purity, wisdom or

zeal which we are wanting. Know definitely what special grace you seek at each Eucharist. God will give more than you ask, and no one grace can be given without helping the growth of other graces too, but mark specially the one definite intention. Desire it with all your heart, and as you leave the Altar, thank God that He has actually given it to you, and go forth and use it at once. The Church is the very home of Hope, and the Altar is the Altar of Hope for those who would truly grow in the fellowship of saintliness.

(3) It is the *Altar of Love.* Our love must begin at the Altar. How often those who come frequently to Communion persuade themselves that they are somehow privileged to indulge a special misunderstanding or private animosity. The faults of others are so patent, so irritating, so aggressive that we can hardly be expected to overcome every single dislike. But there can be no reserve. As we leave the Altar we must look at the Christ in each of our fellow-communicants. That Christ-life is what they came to seek. That Christ-life is what God sees and regards in them. You must know that, with all their defects, that Communion Grace is the fact of paramount importance and determining influence in their lives. If the Eucharist means what it should to you yourself, if you yourself know it to be the guiding, controlling, purifying power in your own life, you will look to see the Christ-life only in all other Communi-

cants too. You will know that they have the new gift which they have sought like you at the Altar. There can be no true fellowship without love. Cultivate an intense desire to see the fruits of the Eucharist in others, and you will be surprised what a new power of fellowship and love flows into your life from the hours spent before the Altar. If only we Communicants can realise amongst ourselves in this simple way the life of love, effective indeed will be our daily witness before the world to the transforming power of the Eucharist as the Fount of Love, and men will know that we are Christ's disciples because we love one another.

(4) It is the *Altar of Life.* Christ in the Eucharist does not merely give us life by an arbitrary act of kindness. But He Himself *is* Life. And He gives us Himself. So we grow in the powers of Eternal Life at the Altar. It is our surest Fellowship with God on Earth. We have not to wait till the world beyond opens to us. We are already in the Heavenlies. Eternal Life has already begun to vivify our souls. In Paradise the souls have gained a fresh access of the same life. The Altar is the pledge of eternal bliss which shall be consummated when we are fully come unto Mount Sion, the city of the living God.

With such thoughts let us grow in love for the Altar of God, and may God crown our love with an ever-growing spirit of Altar-Fellowship.

IV

THE ALTAR AND PRIVATE DEVOTION

THERE is no test of the value of our private prayers so severe and so true as the relation they bear to the Holy Eucharist. And to those who are earnest, no part of their life of devotion gives such frequent anxiety and causes so many searchings of heart as the prayers which gather round their Communion. The reason is obvious. The Eucharist is the crown of all earthly devotion. It is the meeting-place with God. It is the Throne of Grace on earth. It is the Prayer of Prayers. It is the sum of human Thanksgiving. It is the highest expression of man's self-oblation. It has in it the hope of glory. And with its light and grace and glory, every other act of devotion shines and glows. All our prayers derive their energy, their happiness, their power of persistence, their ardour of unselfishness from the joy of our Eucharistic Worship. It is the certainty of our Lord's Blessed Presence in the Eucharist that gives stability, conviction, sincerity, and radiance to all our life of Communion with God. All our prayers are touched with the glory of His Eucharistic Presence. For either they look forward to His coming and we prepare our hearts in penitence and love and faith to welcome Him, or else we look

back with glad thanksgiving and high faith to our last holy tryst with Him, and renew our flagging worship with the recollection of His Presence. And all our daily acts that are really our own strenuous acts of will, the outcome of our whole personality, are strong and holy and effective with the invincible power of His Eucharistic Grace. For they are the acts of a will refreshed with the tireless strength and holy purpose of His glorified and perfect Humanity. So every way our life of devotion, whether of prayer or deed, shines with the glory of Christ's Eucharistic Presence.

A.

First, there is our Preparation for the Blessed Sacrament. The scruples that beset us here, and the uncertainties which perplex us as to the worthiness of our preparation, are often due to forgetfulness of the fact that the best preparation of all is a good life. We make too great a distinction between our daily life and our prayers. So true is this, that sometimes we expect by the length and fervency of our prayers of preparation to atone in some way for the want of high endeavour and holiness of character and conduct in the hours of our daily work. Our work as well as our moments of prayer must be an integral part of our preparation. We must spread over the hours of the day a more constant realisation of God and live more consciously in His Presence, whatever be the duties or engagements of our life. There is no

preparation like that. Many a busy worker, who finds little leisure for quiet meditation or long hours of prayer, may take comfort in remembering that every hour of work, which is consecrated with the desire to serve God and the will to do all as in His Presence, is a real and worthy preparation for the Blessed Sacrament. To many, the thought of this will be a reminder that our preparation begins further back and strikes deeper than it has been our habit to realise. For so often we make a real divorce between our work and our prayers, and think that our preparation begins and ends with the moments we spend upon our knees in anticipation of our next Eucharist. Our preparation is our life, which embraces alike our daily work, our daily conduct, and our daily prayers. Indeed, preparation for the Eucharist is just oblation, and includes the exercise of all our activities, whether of hand or heart or soul. Our first step in worthy preparation is to realise more consciously the Presence of God in our daily life, and to respond more ardently to His call for obedient, strenuous, and happy service in the very work to which His Love has called us.

After that, and as the fruit of such a realisation of God in our daily life, comes the special preparation of prayer and penitence and thanksgiving. Such a preparation will not be difficult, but will be natural and without scruple, for those who are living and working in the daily fear of God. It will be difficult, it will be artificial, it will be full of hesitation and

wanting in the true spirit of humble assurance, for those who think of God's Presence and of the Eucharistic Gift at such moments only, and regard their devotional preparation as something apart from their ordinary daily life. Many will have very little time for such devotional preparation, but where the life itself has aimed all the while at being prayer, the soul is able to gather up all its faculties in a very few moments of devotion, and to prepare itself with true worthiness to receive once more the Eucharistic Gift.

Let us look at the elements of such a preparation. First will be an *Act of Humility.* An Act differs from an ordinary prayer in this, that it is not so much a petition as the expression of a resolution of the will, a declaration of the attitude of the soul towards God, a direction of the mind under the impulse of some special thought about God. By our Act of Humility we express our immediate and real sense of personal unworthiness for so great a mercy as the gift of Christ's Presence. It should be a simple fresh effort of the mind to make very real to ourselves the wonder of God's condescension. That leads up to a definite *Act of Repentance.* Naturally, fully, and in words of our own simple choosing, we declare the sins of which we are conscious—not great sins, perhaps, as the world counts sinfulness, but for ourselves just the wilful failures and tolerated weaknesses that hinder our perfection. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we ask to be allowed to see them as Christ Himself sees

them, and we take shame to ourselves afresh, as we spell them out into the ears of the Divine Compassion.

Then we would make a short *Act of Love*. This is the simple awaking of a new power of affection, not merely the declaration of a long-standing devotion, but the calling out of something deeper in our love which has never yet been stirred. It is not the repetition only of a well-worn formula, however beautiful and true, but the arousal of a new will for a closer union with Him Who is Love Incarnate. Then a brief *Act of Faith*, in which we pledge our whole being to the unimpeachable certainty of our Blessed Lord's Presence in the Sacrament, and arouse in ourselves a new realisation, that this is the ordained means by which the Divine Approach is made to our own lives. Simply we state afresh our conviction that here is the gift of Christ's Glorified Humanity, the source of our daily strength, the highest object of our reverence and worship, the "Pouring of Heaven" into our "Shut house of Life." That leads to our last *Act of Intention* or *Desire*, in which we express the deliberate purpose of aid or comfort or guidance, with which we are at this time seeking the Divine Presence. Our friends need our prayers, there will be thanksgivings to offer, graces for ourselves to seek, difficulties of our own to be solved, dedication of mind or heart in some special way to make. We would not come aimless to the Altar. It is not sufficient to come with a merely indefinite desire to

be better, but we must know the immediately pressing need we would have gratified. We must have a fervent desire to gain this particular help, a conviction that this special spiritual need will here and now be satisfied. So we come with our mind prepared and in this way wonderfully guarded against distraction. And we shall close our Preparation with some Psalm appropriate to the thoughts of the Eucharist, such as Psalm xv., xx., xxiii., xxvi., xxxiv., xl., xliii., li., lxxxiv., lxxxv., cxi., or cxxx. By long years of unbroken use the Church has sanctified the Psalms to the service of Eucharistic Preparation. Quite a new light breaks over the meaning of the Psalms as we read into their large phrases and hallowed words all the immediate needs and hopes of which our hearts are full.

B.

And at the Eucharist itself we have our own private acts of devotion, the happiness of which is essential for the due fruitfulness of our Eucharistic Worship. With a very definite act of the will we lay aside all the anxious burden of our cares as we enter the House of Peace. "In this place will I give peace" is written for us over the Sanctuary. Here in God's Presence we shall be hidden from the provoking of all men. But that sense of Peace will not steal over us unsought. We must exert our wills consciously to attain it, deliberately driving out all dis-

tracting thoughts. That is why a prayer for the Holy Spirit's help will be one of our first acts. We will arouse the energies of the indwelling Spirit. We will drive out all other interests but those of worship and prayer, and set the angels of God to guard all the avenues of thought, and keep for us the way of peace. Then, in a moment, we will renew the thoughts of our earlier preparation, and set our will working once more along the lines that our own private devotion has suggested, kindling afresh our expectation, renewing our conviction, deepening our surrender, aiming afresh at making God's Glory the first motive and the last happiness of our service.

Here especially we need to make a very real and fresh *Act of Faith* in the Eucharistic Presence of our Blessed Lord. "Draw near with faith." It is true of most of our religious belief that it is not often enough renewed with fresh acts of conviction and certainty. We are content to live on with a belief that is not daily refreshed, nor confirmed and ratified anew with daily acts of will. We have had no reason consciously to question any element of Faith. We imagine its power of inspiration, its effective stimulus, will remain unabated if we leave it to itself. We have recited the Creed regularly and gladly. But it has been a formula of faith only, not a fresh act of faith. Each repetition must be a new act of will, binding all the faculties of our being anew to the conviction of its certainty. So the facts of the Christian

Faith become a daily inspiration and work their happy issue in our lives. This is true of our Faith as a whole. It is true also of our belief in the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist. The Presence of Christ is the crown and climax of the Eucharistic Mystery. We need above all to make a really fresh act of Faith in His Presence each time we approach the Eucharist.

Such a habit helps us in two ways. First it helps us to a deeper spirit of worship. Worship and Adoration are not easy for us either to exercise or to express. The fresh realisation of the personal Presence of Christ helps the soul to a fuller expression of its devotion. Secondly, such an act of Faith prevents a disappointment and helps us to the right use of the Grace of the Sacrament. How often disappointment takes possession of us at the very hour of the Eucharist itself. We expect a sensible joy and spiritual ecstasy. But God has given us a spirit of dryness. We looked for vision and the opening of the heavens. We are cast back upon Faith. It is so natural for us to expect that the moment of the Divine Approach will be a moment of rapture and sublime emotion. Yet experience has taught us that such exaltation is rare, however persistently our hope of it abides. God would have us remember that here in this life, even at those high moments when Heaven breaks through, we yet walk by faith and not by sight. Vision, rapture, ecstasy is not the rule of our earthly

Communion. Faith takes for us the place of sight. Faith is sight. And the spirit of disappointment that so often hinders the joy of our Communion will be dispelled as we throw more and more emphasis on our Act of Faith in our Lord's Eucharistic Presence.

I would remind myself afresh, then, with all the intensity of the most earnest conviction, that this is the ordained moment of the Divine Approach. Here, apart from all sensible emotion and joyful realisation, is the certain Presence of Christ. At the very moment of Communion, deadness, spiritual numbness, coldness of devotion may be all that I have to offer. But then I do know, with the most absolute certainty of a renewed and living faith, that my Lord has indeed come to me. There has been an actual access of grace, a new communication of life, a gift of power. Unrealised at the moment and unrecorded by any emotional experience, the Grace of God has yet sunk down into the profound depths of my innermost being. It has enriched that subconscious life which forms so large a factor in our earthly development. And I know that, though I do not feel the sensible workings of that grace and cannot measure its activity by any organ of the emotions, yet, when the need comes, the hidden power of Grace will reveal itself openly in conquest and happy perseverance, which will enable me to do God's pleasure and glorify His Name. There is no greater need in our Eucharistic devotion than this quickening of our faith. We

know indeed that the Blessed Presence is objective, outside ourselves, and not the creation of our faith. But the actual fruitfulness of that Presence in our own lives, whether as the opportunity of our profoundest worship, or as the fountain of new grace and power, does depend upon the energetic exercise of a living faith. To make such an act of faith is to safeguard ourselves against the most frequent and the most dangerous temptation which ever besets us at the moment of our Communion.

Thus all the random thoughts that flash across the soul at the most solemn moments, are sobered into impulses of prayer or praise, as the will is brought to bear on the certainty of Christ's Presence. So Christ lays His spell upon the life, consummates its surrender, hallows all its interests and leads all its faculties to harmonious perfection in the realised consciousness of His Eucharistic Presence.

C.

And after the Eucharist too, we have our moments of private devotion. We make an *Act of Thanksgiving*. This becomes definite and real in proportion as our special intention has been clear and well-sustained. Best it is, if possible, to use our own simple words. If we use the words suggested by any manual, if we use also the familiar and appropriate *Nunc Dimittis*, we must be careful to be very deliberate and attentive to what we say, and try to instil a new and present reality into

the well-known words. Our Act of Thanksgiving is in itself an act of faith in the fulfilment of all that God has promised. But it is well to add a last *Act of Faith*, in order that we may carry right into the midst of the activities of the day, the conviction of Christ's Presence. For want of this faith, continually renewed, we fail to use the grace that has been given. We wait to feel its working in our hearts, and to have some sensible sign of its operation, before we actually put it into use for the immediate needs of our daily life. We must remind ourselves that, apart altogether from all feeling of happiness or consciousness of strength, the grace is there and just waits to be used. We are stronger than we feel. We have powers of holiness and influence of which we are not conscious. They are only revealed when we put them into actual use. Thus we fulfil the bidding "Feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving," as we recollect, and call up into use, the gifts of grace with which His Presence has enriched us. In this way we can understand how our real Thanksgiving, like our true Preparation, passes beyond mere words of prayer into an attitude of the soul, and acts of the will, in the life that follows Communion. Our Thanksgiving is not ended, but is only just beginning, as we rise from our knees at the Service. Each day will have its memory of that Communion. Each day will be bright with joyful anticipation of the next Eucharist towards which God's Love is leading us.

V

THE FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

AT every advance in our life of devotion we extend our conception of Prayer. At first it generally means for us just our petitions. Soon it embraces thanksgiving, then praise of God and our own words of penitential abasement; and then the horizon widens, and we see that Prayer includes acts as well as words, conduct as well as creed, and covers all our God-ward relations—the deepest, most serious, crucial, and eternal part of our life. It is the acknowledgment of God in the life, which cannot be confined to any one faculty, but embraces mind and heart and will, and which cannot be restrained to one mode of expression, but includes deed and thought as well as word. William Law's definition is the true one: "Devotion is neither public nor private prayer. But prayers are particular parts of devotion. Devotion signifies a life given or devoted to God."

A.

Prayer is conscious fellowship with God—not merely communion with God, but co-operation with God. In the neglect of this truth lies the origin of most of our difficulties about prayer. Co-operation,

not compulsion, is the secret of our true prayer. Often our first idea about prayer is that it means our strenuous effort to alter and change the direction of the Divine Will. We see what we need. We would impress that need upon the mind of God, and the intensity of our prayer is in proportion to our determination to bend God's Will. But prayer calls us not to compel God, but to co-operate with Him, calls us into fellowship of will with Him. The proper understanding, then, of the relation of the Divine Will to the will of man is the first condition of true and fruitful prayer.

First we must recognise that there is a Will of God. God does will, and will perfectly. Every attribute of God is instinct with will. The Divine Will is a sovereign, supreme, tranquil, ever-operative, all-pervading power, an active, energetic, undying force. It characterises all the Divine perfections. God's Holiness is not mere passive sinlessness and utter stainless purity, but an active energy, creating holiness in others. His Wisdom is not the mere possession of all knowledge, but a penetrating, active power of Revelation. His Love is the very expression of the Divine Will in its outgoing towards all His creatures. In the case of man, we know Will to be the supreme, characteristic element in his nature, which separates and marks him off from all the rest of creation. Man's will is that part in him which reflects the image of God. The human will, as we see it in the perfect Man Christ

Jesus, is a mirror of the Divine Will in its supremacy, its steadfastness, its pervasiveness, its persistent tranquillity. And that human life alone is strong, steadfast, and tranquil which is lived in the consciousness of the Will of God. As all our acts are acts of will, so every activity of God is the activity of a persistent, supreme, eternal, and unchanging Will. And we can live happily and securely, only as we know there is a conscious purpose in the Power that rules the world, and recognise that the activities, the impulses, the aspirations of to-day are not just the blind, mechanical and necessary consequence of the duties of yesterday, our affections are not just the haphazard outcome and chance development of unconscious instincts, but are meant to be caught up into the strong current of the sovereign energies of the Divine Will. It is Prayer that lifts up our lives into fellowship with the Will of God.

And the question rises, Do we know the nature of God's Will? Is it a Will of Love, a Will of Goodness? And the answer is, Yes, unreservedly yes. The Will of God is ever a Will inspired by absolute knowledge and by perfect Love. Of necessity the Divine Will is the perfect expression of the Divine Nature. Therein the Will of God differs from the will of man. Our wills are often arbitrary and capricious; we take up into our purpose things outside ourselves, choosing as ends for our actions things other than and apart from ourselves, whether worthy or unworthy. That is the

result of our finite nature. But with God there can only be one end for all His activities, and that end is Himself. God, because He is God, can only will one thing—that is, Himself. He cannot deny Himself. God alone can be His own end. Selfishness in that sense, if we dare put it so, is the prerogative of the Divine Goodness. God alone has the love of satisfaction, not of desire. We are very apt to think that man's happiness is the first end of the Divine Will. The first end is God's own glory. True it is that God's glory is also our highest happiness, but it is a great step to recognise at the very beginning that "man is not God, but has God's ends to serve, a master to obey." We do, then, know the nature of God's Will, for it is just the disclosure and manifestation of Himself, and God is Love. The Will of God, therefore, is always the highest good. We begin with an act of faith in that.

But while we recognise that God's Will is always a Will of Love and ever a Will of perfect Wisdom, we must not forget the hindrances which man's will sets to the fulfilment of God's purposes. The cloud which so often hides from our view the vision of God's goodness, and casts its dark shadow over our faith, is the cloud of our own sinfulness. Because the sphere in which God's goodness is revealed is the history of man, among the interchange of many independent wills with their complicated and intricate play of free causes, the immediate fulfilment of God's Will is

hindered by human ignorance and sin. Sin, which prevents so many things, has confused our recognition of what the Divine Will is.

But the very method of the Incarnation and all its conditions show how God can adapt Himself to the changes which the action of man's freewill causes. Take, for instance, the case of the individual sorrow, bereavement, failure, spiritual distress that come to me, not, as far as I can see, through my own direct sin, perhaps with alarming and crushing suddenness and in circumstances of unusual misery. Am I to say this is God's Will for me, and bend before Him with sullen acquiescence, as before some ruthless, irresistible, and unknown fate? No. I will say, God's only Will for me is my good, my happiness, union with Himself, which is His glory. The evil that I see about me, which surrounds, envelops, mesmerises, almost crushes me, is not God's primary Will, not His absolute Will. But it is His Will of permission, the result of His refusal to take away man's birthright of freewill. I will say that under the present conditions of the world's sinfulness and human fellowship in sorrow and pain as well as in joys and blessings, happiness for me and mine and the glory of God can only be achieved through this way of pain. God's Will is only goodness, only love. And the Wisdom of God is ever able so to adjust, and order the effects of the sin, which the preservation to man of his freewill makes ever possible—the

Wisdom of God is able so to introduce new developments in that which has gone astray, that in the end His holy plan of goodness and happiness will be freely and fully achieved. The resources of God are always adequate to meet the new necessities of man's sin, to repair the ravages of his disordered acts. We call it the Divine Economy. That is, not the simple, uninterrupted and absolute course of the fulfilment of the Divine Will, but the Will of God fulfilling itself in perpetual and successful adaptation to the consequences which result from the misuse of human freedom. In the utmost distress, then, I look beyond the present pain and see the fulfilling of a Divine Will of Goodness and Love. I am assured of the Triumph of God's Will in its perfection, and I say:—

> "Ill that He blesses is our good,
> And unblest good is ill.
> And all is right that seems most wrong,
> If it be His sweet Will."

Prayer is my acceptance of the Divine Will, my entrance upon the knowledge of God's purposes, my co-operation with His Goodness.

B.

If Prayer, then, is not a changing of the Divine Will, where is the use, the help, the comfort of praying? If God's Will must in all events be fulfilled, would it not be sufficient if we be dumbly resigned and bow our heads meekly before the sovereign

magnificence of the Divine Will? Those questions are always being asked. And the solution lies in realising that the essence of Prayer is Fellowship.

It is the free and full entering of the human will into conscious fellowship with the Will of God. This must always involve a great effort and a continuous strain. In the prayers of Christ Himself we can see this. The very fact that He, in all His Perfection, should pray, and pray so earnestly and so often, is significant of what prayer must mean for us. The nights spent in prayer, the hours of solitude, the agony of blood, are eloquent of the demand upon the will which true prayer must ever make, as man rises into fellowship with God.

Prayer is thus a great act of will. It is the right use of our will. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine." Prayer is the acceptance of the responsibility that attaches to the possession of freewill. Prayer is the right direction of the redeemed will. It is the uplifting of the will by which we desire above all things the consummate fulfilment of God's Holy Will of Wisdom and of Love. We bend all the forces of our personality that way. We will it vehemently. It is the active outgoing of ourselves with all our faculties of heart and mind and will to co-operate with God. "Thy will be done" is the supreme prayer.

Sometimes we are prompted to ask, "Do we ever need to say more than 'Thy will be done'?" Ideally

it might be sufficient, but practically it is not enough to ensure the reality of our fellowship. For to be real and definite in my act of will, I must offer in detail, and submit to God, the knowledge, the wisdom, and the love that I myself at this moment possess in relation to the particular need which inspires my prayer. I have knowledge of God's ways and of my friend's needs. I have love of God and love of him. I must realise to the full the contents of both. So we articulate that desire "Thy will be done" according to the needs and the knowledge of the moment. For instance, I desire that my friend shall recover from serious illness. I do not know yet whether it be God's Will. As far as I can tell, there is every prospect that it should be. I know that God does not love suffering for its own sake, though I know He can overrule it to infinite good. I know, perhaps, how much suffering the illness brings to others. I can see the loss of a great and powerful activity in many works of kindness and charity, and I do not yet realise in what better way it could be employed. I should miss a companionship which has meant very much to me in moral strength and happiness, and I do not yet see how I could make up for the loss of it in my daily life. I see many others depending on that same strong and cheery personality. As far as my knowledge of God's Will and my love of God can guide me, it seems to me that the glory of God is served better by

his life than his death. I ask God that he may be spared. I ask for his life. I do more than ask. I do all I can by effective act and deed to further what I conceive to be God's Will. I am ready to provide the best medical advice and in every possible way to aid his convalescence. And the effort of my will, by God's gracious ordinance, sets free the energies of the Divine Wisdom and Love. God was waiting for the submission and surrender of my human will before He could grant His full blessings. But His blessings, when they are granted, will not be according to the poor measure of my own weak wisdom and love, but according to the perfect measure of His own Divine insight and infinite love. He will grant the best, just the best for that soul, what is best for him, for the whole Church and for God's own glory. It may be longer life. But suppose it be death? Then I do not say that my prayer is unanswered. My truest prayer has been abundantly answered. And I learn thereby that God has joys of which I know not, into which He calls that soul. God has called me to seeming loneliness, but it is to be the gateway of a wider fellowship. I rise up to the great call of God. I do not chafe at the Divine Will, and mope in misery and sullen, listless resignation. I know that God is Wisdom, that God is Love. I know that God has revealed His Will, and calls me to co-operate with Him in the fulfilment of His wider purpose. With a fresh act of faith I

strive to enter hopefully into this new knowledge of God's Will, and thus my prayer has led to the great blessing of my friend and to the enrichment of my own personality, which sets all its growing faculties afresh at the disposal of God's Will and is lifted up into a fellowship of greater love and greater understanding.

C.

There is one condition to all our prayer, which is very often forgotten. It is variously expressed in the words of our Lord and of His Apostles. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in My Name*, He will give it you." "If we ask anything, *according to His will*, He heareth us, and if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him." That is to say, he who prays must be in sacramental union with Christ, if he is to have effective Fellowship in prayer. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the source of all power to pray. He bestows upon the soul that gift of Sonship which is the characteristic feature of all prayer to our Heavenly Father. It is His guidance that helps us to read aright the purposes of God, His holiness that purifies the desires of the heart, His strength that braces the will. In all the ways of prayer the Holy Spirit "helpeth our infirmities." And the condition "in My Name" is only fully realised when our prayers are embodied in the offering of the Holy Eucharist. The Altar is the earthly

Throne of Intercession, Praise, and Thanksgiving. This is the highest act of the Spirit-bearing Body, the Church. The Eucharist has always been the great moment of the Church's corporate intercession. Then our prayer in Christ's Name is most efficacious, most pleasing to God, most fruitful and most blest, because the whole Eucharist is a Prayer in Act. In all other prayers we make the verbal pleading "through Jesus Christ our Lord." He is the sole Mediator and Advocate, and the merits of His perfect Obedience and sacred Passion are the sole ground of our beseeching. But here, at the Altar, it is not a mere verbal offering, but an Act, a visible Act of Offering, which we make, as we lift up before God the Spotless Sacrifice of Christ, that perfect Manhood which pleads by Its Presence, not only where It lives on Heaven's eternal throne, but also here, where in mystic rite He gives Its Presence to His own. Every element of prayer, be it praise, thanksgiving, humility, intercession, or holy oblation of the will, finds its highest expression in the Holy Eucharist. That is the great Act of Prayer which the whole Church offers, rising in obedient conformity of will into new Fellowship with the will of God. For He Who left to His Church the great command, "Do this in remembrance of Me," must ever regard the Eucharist as the highest effort of the redeemed to offer unceasingly to the Father that very prayer which He gave in His own express words, "Thy will be done."

D.

Where there is Fellowship, there must be likeness. If the God to Whom we pray is Holy, there must be a moral affinity in the will of man who is to co-operate with Him. With God's Holy Will it is evident that only wills of holiness can co-operate With Him every holy will *must* co-operate, working effectually, even though unconsciously, for His holy purposes. Holiness of character must be the condition of effectual prayer, not, of course, consummate holiness, but a will that pursues what it knows of holiness. The desire to rise to the highest and best one knows, the real effort to identify self with all that is beautiful and good, the absolute repudiation of all that is known to be wrong—that is the condition of true prayer. Thus prayer shows itself in the life, and the life becomes prayer. To remember that prayer is more than words, that it is the very attitude of the life, the very spirit of our work, is to have both a warning and an encouragement. The warning comes to us to make us beware of hypocrisy. Prayer is not a mere charm of words, nor a momentary mood of dissatisfaction with sin, set in the midst of a life that is averse from God. St. Augustine speaks in his Confessions of the prayers which he said with his lips, while his heart and life were deliberately turned away from God. "O wretched youth that I was, I begged of Thee the gift of chastity, but I said,

'Give me chastity and self-control, but not just yet.'" There is no spell in words of prayer which are not the expression of a *will* that seeks to be holy and good. The life may not be divorced from the prayer. The life *is* the prayer. Experience shows that all of us need to take this warning home to our hearts from time to time. The ideal of prayer and the ideal of life must be one and the same. There must be no artificial separation between petition and practice.

But there is also encouragement for many an anxious soul. Many of us have lives that are filled to the brim with busy activities, that wear out brain and soul and tire out hands and feet. While we know and feel the need of quiet hours to be alone with God, the day gives no chance of more than the merest moments, if the work is to be fully done—work that gets us up early and sends us weary and late to bed, work so absorbing that our energies are worn out by its strenuous demands. Then it is good to remember, that if our work is consciously dedicated to the glory of God, it is prayer. It is the oblation of the will along the lines that God has marked out for us. It is the means of our Fellowship with God. And though, because of the mental stress of the work, we cannot at each moment be actively conscious of God, yet it is work which at the beginning has been dedicated to Him, and again and again we are able to make short acts of realisation of the Presence of God. Such work sanctifies us, and

unites us to the Will of God and deepens our Fellowship with the Will of God, Who eternally works. Many an earnest scruple may thus be relieved, if, when we know that such all-insistent and exacting work is going to engage all the energies of the day, we are careful at the beginning to inspire that work with the spirit of oblation and lift it up into prayer. In this way the humble work of countless toilers sends forth day by day an energy of holy influence which strengthens the Fellowship of the Saints, and proves itself very Prayer, "the ascent of the soul to God, the beginning of that blessed converse which shall be the fulness of eternal bliss."

VI

OUR PRIVATE PRAYERS

IF we look for a period in the history of our country when the spirit of devotion had been wellnigh lost and signs of deep moral enthusiasm and heartfelt sincerity of purpose, in public and private life alike, were wanting, we turn to the eighteenth century. In that age, when religion lay bound in the grip of a cold and heartless intellectualism, when the spirit of apathy was lulling the souls of men to easy slumber, it was William Law who broke the spell of Satan and roused the dying spirit of religion with his Serious Call to a Holy and Devout Life. No English Book of Devotion has ever been so opportune in the moment of its appearing, none has exercised so great and so lasting an influence. Not only did Law's work at once dispel the mischievous notion that piety must always be associated with intellectual weakness, but it awakened a spirit of glowing conviction, a habit of personal devotion, a passion for the Christian ideal and a practical enthusiasm in daily life, which have ever since characterised the best moments of our Church's witness.

And the interest of this lies in the fact that the book is a book on Prayer. It is the best, the most real, the most practical book on Prayer that has been written.

A.

And this very fact illustrates the truth, that if we want to have strong, vigorous, calm, devoted, Christ-like lives, we must set great store by our prayers, we must take great pains with them, we must take pains not only now and then, at special crises, but *always*. We must make for ourselves the *habit* of taking pains. That is generally our first failure. We have expected our prayers to take care of themselves, and have spent no regular, no increasing pains over them. This is the commonest trouble with us all. And William Law, with that rare and subtle insight of his, with his own felicitous charm of language and gently caustic wit, describes some moments at least in the lives of most of us, when he draws the picture of Mundanus.

"Mundanus is a man of excellent parts and clear apprehension. He is well advanced in age and has made a great figure in business. Every part of trade and business that has fallen in his way has had some improvement from him; and he is always contriving to carry every method of doing anything well to its greatest height. Mundanus aims at the greatest perfection in everything. The clearness and strength of his understanding, which he is constantly improving by continual exercise, by often digesting his thoughts in writing and trying everything every way, has rendered him a great master of most concerns in human life. Thus has Mundanus gone on increasing his knowledge and judgment, as fast as his years

came upon him. The one only thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion. This is just in the same poor state it was, when he was only six years of age, and the old man prays now in that little form of words which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning. This Mundanus, that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil, or ever took the meanest trifle into his hand, without considering how it might be made or used to better advantage, has gone all his life long praying in the same manner as when he was a child, without ever considering how much better or oftener he might pray, without considering how improvable the spirit of devotion is, how many helps a wise and reasonable man may call to his assistance, and how necessary it is that our prayers should be enlarged, varied, and suited to the particular state and condition of our lives. If Mundanus sees a book of devotion he passes it by, as he does a spelling book, because he remembers that he learned to pray so many years ago, under his mother, when he learned to spell."

We must be ready, then, always to take pains with our prayers. Then the moment we have begun to take pains, we are generally confronted with another trouble, the trouble of growing dissatisfaction. We never feel satisfied with what we can do. This we all have felt. It is one of the regular difficulties of the religious life. Our ideal always outstrips our attainment. We are always learning to be patient with

ourselves. Patience is better than satisfaction. And in our prayers Patience is so valuable because it throws us back upon God. Satisfaction generally means content with self. Patience means content with God, and what He gives. For the Spirit of Prayer is His Gift. And joy in Prayer is His Gift. Doubtless, however great the pains we spend, we shall often lack the conscious and joyful sense of the Divine acceptance, we shall often miss the comfort of immediate assurance, we shall always have the pain of falling short of the highest ideal. But then the thought of God's Patience will awake our patience. We shall remember that quite apart from the *joy* and happiness of prayer, there lies upon us the simple, utter *duty* of prayer, as the natural offering of the creature to a faithful and loving Creator. And no lack of conscious joy, no sense of the difficulty of our prayers, or the miserable impotency of our highest efforts, will prevent us from taking the utmost pains, nor dim in our hearts the glad and growing conviction that God hears and loves our prayers.

B.

For those who are ready to take pains with their prayers a few suggestions may be offered—simple, practical hints that have just the merit of being approved by experience. Our difficulties in prayer are fundamentally the same, and these suggestions will be found to meet some of the difficulties most often felt.

First, we must be careful to think out the *order* of

our prayers. General discontent with our prayers arises from indefiniteness as to the way in which we should approach God. However short our prayers may be, there is a right and a wrong order of approach. Our morning and our evening prayers need to be carefully thought about, that they may not be mere heedless repetitions of one another, but each may have its fullest appropriateness to the different hours of the day. Perhaps many of us might sketch out a simple plan of morning prayer like this:—

(*a*) *Realise the Presence of God.* This is the beginning of all prayer, the conscious realisation by the direct effort of our will that God is present. Perhaps we shall be able to do this without the aid of any word, by the simple concentration of thought, directing all our mind upon God. It means that whatever comes to us as we kneel will be seen only in the light of God's Presence. This realisation of His Presence is not merely a momentary act preceding our prayer. It directs the soul into the attitude which is to be continuously preserved all through the time of prayer. That is why it is an effort, and why it is indispensable. If we cease to hold ourselves in that Presence, we cease to pray. If we find our thoughts wandering, and we cannot recall them, we had best get up off our knees and not accustom our bodies to kneel when we are not praying. Day dreams and idle fancies will soon tear out the heart of prayer, if we are not jealous of the sincerity of our

kneeling posture. And this act of realising the Presence of God will prevent that repeated carelessness of attention, which allows the mention of a familiar name in intercession to open a door, through which the imagination flies far away from the remembrance of God's Presence. When we realise God's Presence, we shut up ourselves with Him, we exclude all else, not in the sense that we remove ourselves from our daily surroundings and are transported from the realm of earth, but in the sense that we see things as they truly and really are, in their fullest being, in their proper worth, in their true relations, as they are before God. The joy, the gladness, the strength, the beauty of God's Presence—this is the atmosphere of prayer. To hold oneself in the Presence of God is an effort. And perhaps we shall have to shorten the length of what we are at present attempting in prayer, in order to regain a spirit of true and unbroken attention. There are words of the Psalmist which, repeated over and over again, may help to confirm in us this realisation of God's Presence. "We wait for Thy loving kindness, O Lord, in the midst of Thy Temple."—"In Thy Light shall we see Light."—"Thou shalt hide them privily by Thy Presence from the provoking of all men."—"Into Thy Hands I commend my spirit."—"I have set God always before me, for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall."—"In Thy Presence is the fulness of joy." Thus we are saved from dashing

heedless into the sacred Presence, and thus we train ourselves to approach humbly the Throne of Grace.

(*b*) *Praise God.* The realisation of God's Presence merges into the acknowledgment of His Glory. This seems the most natural order, though many may prefer to begin with an act of Penitence, and then, from that, pass on to Praise. Each has his own experience of what proves most effective, but, whether it come now or later, the Praise of God must be the outstanding feature of our prayer. Our prayers fail, they grow listless and dull, they lack interest, because they miss the note of unselfish adoration and radiant praise. They scarce reach in their scope beyond ourselves. First, we must praise God for what He is. Quite apart from all our own temporal needs, all our own misdoings, all our friends' sorrows and interests, our first and simple duty, to say nothing of our privilege and joy, lies in the humble acknowledgment of the Majesty and the Beauty and the Love of God. For this we must train ourselves by thinking more about God. There are familiar forms of adoration and praise ready to our lips—the opening verses of the *Te Deum*, the simple *Gloria*, the solemn *Sanctus* or the words of some well-known hymn. But better still it is to collect for ourselves from the Bible some of the attributes of God, which tell of His Holiness, His Omnipotence, His Condescension, His Love, and address Him in the very terms of His own revelation. The list of adjectives which we use in our praise of

God is very small—Almighty, Eternal, Merciful; the titles we use are very few—God, Lord, Saviour, Father. These words by their very frequent repetition tend to lose their full meaning. We want to use up in our prayers all the growing knowledge we have of God's Being. Let us ransack Scripture for God's own revelation of Himself and learn to praise Him more worthily for what He is. The desire to do this will add a new zest to our Bible-reading, and as we gather together and treasure up the manifold attributes of God, we shall make a perceptible growth in the knowledge of His Love and Power. To begin the day with a fresh remembrance of God's Love, and Care, and Might, is to arm oneself anew against temptation and to find strength and victory for the day's work. Thus we shall underline in our Bibles, and gather into our manuscript book of prayer, the different attributes of God and use them in our acts of Praise. We would glorify God as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto"—as "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him"—as God, "Who turnest the shadow of death into morning and dost renew the face of the earth"—"the God Who helpeth us and poureth His benefits upon us, our God, even the God of Whom cometh salvation, the Lord by Whom we escape death." And so also with the titles and

attributes of our Blessed Lord and of the Holy Ghost, which the revelation of the New Testament provides. Thus to enhance and enrich our praise of God is to strengthen the very foundations of our life of prayer.

(*c*) *Act of Humility and Penitence.* Then we need to acknowledge our own weakness and ask pardon for our sin. The thought of God's greatness suggests the natural contrast. With the fresh remembrance of God's mercy and might before us, we can express in our own simple words the sense of our own sinfulness and our need of His grace for safety through this very day. If we lack words of our own, there is the General Confession in our Morning Service, and there are simple forms which every book of private prayer suggests. Only beware of unreal expressions and of needless repetition. Special seasons like Lent and Advent will always enrich for us this part of our daily prayer, and enable us to draw afresh upon the penitential language of the Bible for the more worthy expression of our growing humility.

(*d*) *Prayer to the Holy Ghost.* It is wise to look forward to the duties of the day, to forecast the probable difficulties, to think of the special temptations or special joys which may be ours, and then, in the face of that simple prospect, to ask for the definite counsel and guidance of the Spirit just for to-day. And we can make a resolve to call to remembrance His solemn Indwelling at certain times in the day.

(*e*) *Intercession.* This part of our prayer is so

natural and so generally understood that we need say little of it now. Only there is one point that calls for counsel. We have so many to intercede for, that, with the short time that we can devote to prayer, it is difficult to make the remembrance of them real. The prayer either becomes a bare list of names or else it dissatisfies us with its omissions. The only plan is to make a careful scheme, by which we divide out the subjects for intercession among the different days of the week. Certain names must be daily in our prayers: there are others whom we will very carefully remember once a week. This saves that general sense of indefinite dissatisfaction which so often besets us, and it also ensures a more deliberate remembrance. Be careful especially in intercession to recall yourself to the sense of God's Presence, in order to prevent wasting the moments of prayer in idle distraction, day dreams and castle building.

(*f*) *Act of Conformity to God's Will.* This may perhaps end our morning prayer. We need to dwell on the Will of God, renewing our sense of vocation each day, holding before us the certainty of God's individual Care and Providence. We ask God to make us love every token of His Will, and we move out to the day's work with the consciousness that God's Love has prepared the way for us, and everywhere we shall come upon the traces of the Divine Wisdom.

Set out thus at length, this may seem rather an ambitious scheme of morning prayer, but all the

essential elements of it can be preserved, and yet the time of prayer be suited readily to our opportunities and our needs. The important thing is that we have some real plan of our own—whether it be like this, or different, matters little.

Then for our evening prayer we shall have some similar plan. *Thanksgiving* will have special prominence. And our *self-examination* will need care. This proves of all things the most difficult. The manuals give us such dull and inappropriate suggestions. The questions make no real appeal to our conscience. The same sins trample over the hardening "wayside" of our hearts day after day. Evidently something else is needed to break up the ground. If we have made a forecast of the day's work in the morning, it will generally be sufficient to ask ourselves earnestly whether we have been able to keep our morning resolution of conformity to God's Will, and have recalled the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost and the Presence of Christ at the critical moments of the day. If we find that, by God's grace, we have been able to be true to our purpose, let us give careful thanks to God for His help. If we find that our will has failed, and that we have fallen short of what we should have been, let us wait for a moment and take seriously to heart what really has happened, and make a humble act of penitence and a new resolve that to-morrow shall not see a repetition of to-day's defeat. Probably some *intercessions*, some

petitions for such special graces as our review of the day shows most necessary, and a simple *commendation* of ourselves to God for the night will close our evening prayers.

C.

There is a special difficulty which attends our night prayers. We are so very tired, and our minds are so sleepy and unfit for the real strain of prayer. It is a wise thing to train oneself into the habit of saying the evening prayers earlier in the evening, before the evening meal perhaps, instead of leaving them till the very last and sleepiest moments of all the day. But it needs training, because at first we are not accustomed to it and it seems strange. Very often those who come back from work and cannot find a quiet time or place for their evening prayers, may have a chance of slipping into a church on their way home or afterwards, and so gain a few moments of quiet before the very end of the day. Then we should have just the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and our Commendation for the very last moment before we go to sleep. A hard counsel, but a very effective help is this, after we have gone to bed to let the echo of our prayers ring on and on in our hearts until we have fallen asleep.

Where we have fallen into the habit of distracted and inattentive prayer, it will often be found useful to say our prayers aloud, speaking just loud enough to be able to hear ourselves. It keeps the mind alert and prevents wandering thoughts.

The question is sure to arise, how far shall I use a manual of devotion? We know what a hindrance they can be as well as a help. No manual ought absolutely to take the place of our own self-expressed prayers. Every time of prayer ought to find us using at least one prayer which comes from no book, but is the simple unfettered expression of our own immediate needs and aspirations. This too needs careful training. It is not hard, with a little preseverance, to obtain a very happy and sufficient habit of extempore prayer. We begin best with taking the Lord's Prayer and slowly paraphrasing each petition, unfolding in our own words the fuller meaning of each separate clause. Soon, aided by our study of the Bible phrases and our growing knowledge of God's revelation, we are able to express our own devotion readily and fluently in words sufficiently dignified and clear, which have become very, very real to us. We know, of course, that God does not wait for beautiful language and elegance of style in our simple prayers, but it is also true that clearness and majesty of diction go hand in hand with clearness of thought and reverence.

D.

When we come to arrange our subjects of prayer for different days according to some ordered scheme, it will be found a very great help if we choose for each day of the week some one central thought, and group all our prayers round that. For instance, if we choose the Incarnation as our special subject of com-

memoration on Monday, then Humility would be the special grace for ourselves to pray for, Children and all that concerns family life and all the relations of human love would form the subject of our Intercessions, our Praise would be specially praise of the Incarnate. On Tuesday we might specially celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit. To that day we would naturally assign our intercessions for those about to be confirmed, those who need the special help of the Holy Ghost, those who are bound in any special religious fellowship. So Wednesday might suggest the commemoration of the Church, Thursday of the Holy Eucharist, Friday of the Cross, and Saturday of Paradise, and round each day would naturally gather the subjects of prayer most appropriate to each day's commemoration. So many subjects offer themselves for natural division into sevens. There are the seven Words from the Cross, the seven Penitential Psalms, the seven Gifts of the Spirit, and the seven clauses of the Lord's Prayer, while the Beatitudes can easily bear compression into a sevenfold division, and all these suggest a weekly scheme of prayer. These are all so many ways of finding a new interest in our prayers and lifting them out of the rut of the commonplace.

We must not be afraid to use well-known forms of prayer. Indeed, we need to make more frequent use of those most beautiful Collects in our own Prayer Book, which have an almost inexhaustible applica-

tion. And we can use hymns more often in our prayers. The Lord's Prayer can also be used for any need with special intention, when it is hard to find words of our own to express our Godward desires. All our private prayers have their relation to the Eucharist. They either carry on our preparation or enrich our Thanksgiving. It prevents a wrong individualism if we remember this connection with our greatest act of Corporate Worship, and it is partly for this reason that it is so helpful, as we kneel down in our rooms, to picture to ourselves the Altar where God stoops to meet us. And the sense of God's Presence all through our prayer is more easily maintained as we hold before our eyes this remembrance of the Sanctuary, where Christ's Eucharistic Presence shines.

These are little ways in which our daily offering of Prayer may be enriched. We must not be surprised that over our daily prayers we have to fight our hardest battles, for those familiar words are true :—

> " Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
> The Christian's native air ;
> His watchword at the gates of death ;
> He enters Heaven with prayer."

And it is not likely that Heaven can be won without many a struggle. Let us kneel on. Our Blessed Lord knelt and His Agony came upon Him. He knelt on, and "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven strengthening Him." So for us too may God send His good angels to strengthen us in our agony of Prayer.

VII

PENITENCE

THE Church of Christ as the School of Holiness and Fellowship of the Saints has her own discipline of Penitence, and as the Treasury of Grace brings to the repentant soul the succours of Divine Love. The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil and put away sin. By the ministries of His Church He carries on the work of conquest in each individual soul. Clear and distinct is the commission with which our Lord charged His Apostles to continue His work. Explicit and absolute is the power with which He endued them for that ministry. Of Himself He had said, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin." To His Apostles He said, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so I send you." And this commission Jesus defined more fully in the words that immediately follow, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." The penitential discipline of the Church is based upon the security of this commission.

A.

In two ways the teaching and work of Christ had deepened the opportunities of Penitence. Christ had revealed by His life the gravity of sin. And He had provided atonement for all those wilful sins which under the old covenant were utterly beyond remedy. Already the law had emphasised the need of special and personal cleansing for the guilt of individual sin. However faithfully each one might join in the worship of the Congregation, even on the great Day of Atonement, yet for his own individual sins he must offer special sacrifices of atonement. It was natural, therefore, that with the deepening of the sense of sin, the early Church should realise the special need of an individual application of the Merits of Christ's cleansing Blood for individual forgiveness. Hand in hand went the sense of *corporate* sin and the deepening of *individual* penitence. In those early days the feeling of fellowship in the Church was very strong, and the guilt of individual sin was in a real sense shared by the whole community. The sin of one brought its shame upon all.

The whole Body suffered with the sin of one of its members. This corporate sense of sin is strongly emphasised in the earliest penitential discipline which the history of the Church reveals. The Apostles, in pursuance of their commission, had prepared the way for the establishment of a habit of

public penance in the face of the Church. The sinner would first confess his sin, whether publicly before the Church or more probably in secret before the priest. His penance openly performed was the proof to all of the sincerity of his repentance. Absolution would then restore him to the peace and fellowship of the Church. Thus for some five centuries the discipline of the Church bore witness to the close fellowship of its members and to the gravity of sin in the lives of the Baptised.

This is the ordinary practice to which the writings of the Fathers bear witness. The doctrinal foundation on which the habit was built was this. They enunciate two principles, two complementary truths which they state and keep side by side. First, they speak with definiteness of the absolute value for forgiveness of a living and true contrition, apart from all outward means of grace. Through the merits of the all-atoning Passion of Christ, true contrition avails for full forgiveness. And upon that assurance the soul can rest. But side by side with that is the second truth, that the outward means of Sacramental Absolution have an abiding place in the Ministries of the Church. Not only are there cases of sin where the use of that means is the only sure proof of penitence, but even in the case of true and assured contrition there is a place for the grace of priestly Absolution. For over and above the Divine Forgiveness, thus imparted and assured, there

comes a larger grace of the Holy Ghost, with its own proper gift of spiritual joy and its own quickening of life and fruitfulness.

Thus while the habit of public penance was established in the early Church, it was a witness to the deep sense of the corporate nature of all sin among the faithful. But it can readily be understood that as the Church grew in numbers and in general favour, much difficulty might be found in retaining so public a form of discipline. Discipline was somewhat relaxed when the severities of persecution were withdrawn. The sudden extension of the Church by the addition of so many new converts, the growth of heresy, the new friendly relation of the ecclesiastical and civil courts, the dread of disclosing scandals which might bring shame upon the Church—all these causes gradually worked together from the fourth century to produce a change in discipline. And from that century onwards penance began in ordinary cases to be performed in private. Only notorious guilt and special cases of voluntary humiliation were subject to the old discipline of public penance.

B.

No change came until the Middle Ages, when at the Lateran Council in the thirteenth century Confession was made a matter of obligation as a preparation for Communion, and thus enjoined as a condition of full fellowship with the Church. This

was no doubt a conscientious attempt to enforce a return to the discipline of the Church which had suffered neglect during an age of increasing turbulence and moral laxity. But it was a distinct innovation upon ancient and primitive custom, and was an unjustified restriction upon the conditions of Church membership. The English Church, in the next century, duly and authoritatively for the time accepted the innovation of the Lateran Council. In the years that followed, the whole heart of Penitential Discipline was eaten out by the abuse of the system of Indulgences. This disturbance of the even balance of the teaching of antiquity by the demand for the compulsory use of Sacramental Absolution brought its inevitable Nemesis, and helped to fan the flame of revolt against all Church authority in the sixteenth century.

In the Church of England we have special cause of thanksgiving for the full knowledge of the antiquities of the Church which such men as Cranmer and Cosin possessed. There were voices raised loudly enough for the total overthrow of all Church discipline and a complete breach with the past. There were pleas earnest and frequent for the innovations of the Lateran Council. But under the guidance of such men of learning as Cranmer, and with the ready concurrence of even such reforming spirits as Ridley and Latimer, the English Church was led back to the old path of primitive Church principle

in the matter of Confession. Our Church proclaims with unhesitating precision that Sacramental Absolution is part of her treasury of grace. Her Priests are commissioned to exercise this Ministry of Reconciliation. The words in which our Lord first gave this Commission to His Apostles are part of the very words of Commission with which our Priests are ordained to-day. "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of His Holy Sacraments, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Thus the power is given and the Priest is bidden to be a faithful dispenser of the Sacramental Grace of which he is the sure and certain instrument. So much from the side of the Priest. And on the side of the Penitent, the Prayer Book speaks with words of loving exhortation, when it asks one who requires further comfort or counsel in the preparing of his heart for Communion, to come "to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution together with ghostly counsel and advice to the quieting of his conscience and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." While, in the Visitation

of the Sick, at the critical moment of a man's illness, when the sincerity and fulness of his penitence must be assured, the Rubric runs as follows: "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the Priest shall absolve him, if he humbly and heartily desire it, after this sort," and then is given the form of words to be used for Sacramental Absolution.

The position of our Church is therefore very clear with regard to this Sacrament. The Church does not compel its use, but does heartily and earnestly commend it. In so doing, the English Church preserves the simplicity of the primitive faith, which, while it acknowledged the sufficiency of true and living contrition for forgiveness apart from the use of outward means, yet jealously preserved the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and accorded to it the highest place in the ministries of the Church to the penitent soul.

C.

What, then, shall be the fruit of our deepened Penitence? The elements of Penitence will be the same for us all, whether we use the special ministry of Sacramental Absolution or not.

(1) The first step is Confession. Confession is always confession to God, however it be made. And the meaning of it is this. We want to offer our-

selves wholly to God. We do not know what we have to offer until we have made a careful examination of ourselves, for we are what our past has made us. And having traced out every root of evil, we make a solemn repudiation of what is wrong, and offer ourselves for God's merciful acceptance. It is wonderful how, out of the dark spaces of the past, there rises up, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, the memory of that for which we seek forgiveness. Sometimes, through the length of years, or the weakness of our faculties, we have the sense that much is forgotten. But if we have really shirked nothing, and have made our offering as complete and as humble as possible, then we can trust the covenanted mercies of God, and be sure that we have recalled all that the Holy Spirit allows us to remember, and as I ask pardon for "these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember," I know that God grants me forgiveness for all the past, known and unknown. If our confession be made to God in the hearing of His Priest, there is no difference of course in the actual forgiveness, for there can be no measure nor degree in forgiveness. It is either absolutely given or absolutely withheld. But it will be found that the very discipline of telling out our sins before another not only leads to a much fuller examination and a deeper humiliation, but helps towards a more adequate realisation of the gravity of sin and becomes a real deterrent against repetition. Never in

any case will the confession lead to despair or morbid sadness, for it will be remembered that every stage of our great penitential effort brings joy to the Heart of the Great Absolver, and He will vouchsafe a special sense of His glad nearness to us if we ask Him. Our self-examination is made in the consciousness of His Presence, and in His Presence is the fulness of joy.

(2) The second element is Contrition. Contrition is perhaps the hardest part of our preparation. But we must be careful not to make too great a demand upon our emotions. Contrition is godly sorrow, sorrow for our sin because it grieves our Blessed Lord. We can be assured of that sorrow, not by the depth of our emotions, but by the actual effect upon our lives. Are we forsaking sin? Love is the fulfilling of His Commandments. Is this the love which we are offering? The broken and contrite heart which we desire is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and if we submit ourselves to His inspiration, we must be satisfied with what sensible emotion of grief He allows to us. We are distressed, because we do not really feel so sorry at grieving Jesus as we know we feel at causing pain to our friends on earth. And then we doubt the sincerity of our Contrition. Let us be content to take the rule of Thomas à Kempis here: "Do what thou canst and do it diligently." Offer what we have of present sorrow. It is not now what it will be after forgiveness. Then it is that

Contrition will grow. But it is all the Holy Spirit has given to us now, and we can trust His guiding. As long as there is no conscious resistance of His inspiration, there never need be any doubt about the reality of our Contrition. He will lead us to deeper love, perhaps even to the penitence of tears, but not yet. Perhaps a simple test is this. If I picture to myself the face of our Blessed Lord, and see the shadow of sorrow passing over His Face as He contemplates my sin, am I sorry just because He has been made sorry? Am I so sorry, not that I cry and feel very miserable, but that I am compelled to turn from my sin and desire to bring gladness to that Sacred Heart by newness of life? It is here that to many souls the discipline of Sacramental Absolution brings untold comfort, for it offers to the penitent the reassuring judgment of one who has been trained in the workings of contrition, and is able to give consolation and confidence to the shrinking and scrupulous conscience, trembling with the fears of unreality and imperfect penitence.

(3) The last step in assured penitence is the resolution of the will. Here many a penitence fails. In the face of so many known sins in the past, in the presence of so many repeated failures, in the clear consciousness of the struggle that will be needed in the future, there must yet be the act of the whole personality, which deliberately and emphatically puts away sin and turns faithfully to

holiness and to God. That act of the will can only be made in reliance upon the indwelling strength of the Holy Spirit That act of will must not only be made now, it must be daily repeated. Temptation will not cease after forgiveness. The will must be daily reset against all that is evil, daily directed afresh towards that which is good. It is not sufficient to *desire* to be better, to *hope* to be purer, to *wish* to be holier, to rekindle high ideals. We must *will*, *will* to give up that sin. And nothing less than a generous, confident, and noble exercise of will can satisfy the demands of penitence. We must *will* with all the force of our personality, in simple reliance upon the strength of the Holy Spirit. Lives remain for years unreformed, crushed under the burden of the same repeated sins, becoming sullen, morose, despairing, because they will not have the manliness to *will* generously. Let us pray that this last element of a perfect penitence may be granted to us.

D.

For all of us alike, whether we ask for the help of the priestly ministry or not, this is the Penitence which must be sought, the Penitence to which God, in His abounding mercy and of His overflowing grace, grants the happiness of Pardon. Some may be helped to the fulness of that penitence by the secret ministries of the Holy Ghost. But many may find in the Sacramental ministries of the Spirit the

help which they need in the deepening of penitence. They will recognise that such a discipline satisfies that desire for humiliation which marks the contrite heart. They will see how it offers a help to the fulness of self-examination, prevents self-deceit, corrects morbidity, aids true self-knowledge, and gives to the anxious soul that certain pledge of needed assurance which is the mark of all Sacraments. Moreover, the depth of our special penitential effort is rewarded by a power of greater receptiveness of grace, and there is the special grace of the Spirit which brings both joy and effective strength for newness of life. While Satan has ever done much to make the way of Sacramental Absolution doubtful and hard for many of us, we can take his earnest efforts as the measure of its helpfulness. And if God should show that this is the way of Penitence for us to tread, may we have strength to follow where God calls. There are no words to express the unbounded joy that accompanies God's forgiveness. It needs great faith for the forgiven soul to look at itself steadily in the new dignity which the Divine Pardon has bestowed upon it. For it means no less than this, that God, looking down upon the soul after Absolution, sees it no longer stained with the guilt of its old sins, but sees it clothed with the robe of Christ's Righteousness, restored to that baptismal purity with which the Holy Ghost had first endowed it. God sees it thus. But

for ourselves it needs high faith that we, with all our memory of the past, may dare to look at our own souls as God Himself sees them. Yet He asks no less. Such faith helps us to use aright the grace of Absolution. And often enough the Grace of Absolution has proved inoperative and almost fruitless in our lives, because we have not consciously lived on that high level of the pardoned life, to which God by His mercy has raised us. We must not measure our penitence by the fervency of our emotions. Nothing is more disastrous. Penitence, like love, has its first ardours, its first thrill of passionate emotion, which never can be recalled. The consciousness of sin, which grows in poignancy, does not show itself in deeper emotional feeling, but in an abiding spirit of humility, a persistent purpose of service and steadfast obedience, and an ever-growing sense of responsibility. These are the tests of true penitence which never fail. Our consciousness of sin ever grows as we press along the way of penitence, but it is to be remembered that, however deep the consciousness of sin to which after long years of growth we may attain, deeper far, infinitely deeper, has been the sense of our own sin which God already realised at the actual moment when He bestowed upon us His full pardon. We must live in the certainty of that forgiveness which has restored us to the full fellowship of love both with God and man.

VIII

MEDITATION

MEDITATION is one of the greatest aids in the life of Fellowship. Satan knows that well, and makes it very difficult for most of us, so difficult that we all have shirked the conflict and at some time have confessed ourselves beaten. There are some who, after long struggles, have lost hope in their own powers of Meditation; there are others who have not yet attempted to make Meditation a part of their regular devotional life.

A.

To both of these classes a strong appeal may be made to look at Meditation as a necessary step in the full realisation of that Sacramental Fellowship which is extended to us at the Altar. Of course, it is not itself a Sacrament. The Sacraments, of all things, come first in our religious life as the channels, not only of new birth, but of continual purification and increasing enlightenment and holiness and strength. To the power of Sacramental grace there is no barrier except that of human infirmity, which we by our own will interpose. How often experience shows

that these great, divine, illimitable powers lie inoperative within us for want of true, deep apprehension, and conscious co-operation of the will to assimilate and absorb their influence and translate them into action. Prayer and Meditation are the means which fit us to apply these divine powers immediately and aright, which give us the faculty of realisation, and show us how to correspond at once to the new gifts of grace, and to adapt the new spiritual forces to the practical needs and opportunities of daily life. Meditation is the handmaid of the Sacramental life.

Many definitions have been given of Meditation. Looked at rightly, it is just a realisation of the Presence of God—a realisation which is mediated for us by the Word of God. It is just the approach to the Heart of God through the channel of His written Word. It differs from prayer really in this, that in prayer we speak to God, but in Meditation it is rather God Who speaks to us. The Holy Spirit moving within the soul speaks to us through the very words which He has inspired, and shows us the things of Jesus. Just because it is a Divine movement in the soul, it calls into play all the deepest energies of the will, the heart, and the intellect. None of our faculties can lie beyond its reach. It is the gathering of all the powers of the soul in the apprehension of God. The amount of earnest and deliberate concentration of

the mind which it requires is suggested by the words of a spiritual writer, who defines Meditation as "the quiet, serious, devout fixing of the mind on some great truth or fact of religion, holding it before the mind steadily, silently, brooding over it till it becomes warm and vital and melts into us." Now very few people are accustomed to such attentive concentration in any of the duties of life, and least of all in their religious exercises. It is no wonder, then, that we encounter difficulties at the very beginning. It makes the most unmitigated claim upon our will. And if our will is out of hand, and our attention hard to fix, in the ordinary affairs of the day, it is not strange that we find distraction and listless dreaming start into woeful prominence when we first take up Meditation.

Meditation is a realisation of God's Presence. Let us be honest. Do we really want to realise His Presence? Most failures in Meditation are to be sought there. No rules, no method, no elaboration of schemes, no ingenuity of study will ever make Meditation possible, if this first desire is not there. And we may well begin by asking God to quicken that desire and purify our motives that we may truly want to realise His Presence through each day. For Meditation is meant to spread the consciousness of God increasingly through all the moments of the day. The Meditation that fails, however clever its intellectual analysis, however rapt its momentary

vision, however deep its theological acumen, is the Meditation that is not remembered and recalled throughout the crises of the day. For Meditation must stir the will actively with new and immediate motives derived from the fresh apprehension of God, which the study of His Word has given. It is not an intellectual exercise, not merely an access of theological knowledge, but it is being brought face to face with God, receiving from Him, as it were, the password of the day, which through all our waking hours shall be ever in our heart to test friend and foe, a perpetual reminder of the allegiance which we owe to the Captain of our Salvation.

B.

There are many ways in which we can fulfil the exercise of Meditation, ways which make it accessible to all, if only there be the will to realise the Presence of God.

(1) The very simplest way of all is to learn a short text at the beginning of the day. Perhaps some almanack hangs on the bedroom wall, perhaps a magazine may suggest a text, or some book of daily reading, which contains more than we can read in full, may yield just so much of its treasures to us. We learn that text—with its few words easily remembered—with the belief that God would have us live this day in the light of that special word of warning or encouragement, and with the intention of recalling it

definitely and deliberately to our minds many times in the day. It is wonderful how the events of the day will bring out into new and startling significance the truth of a text thus taken into our lives as a special message from God. It is a real meditation, bringing us consciously into the Presence of God, and throwing God's light and God's protection over the problems and perils of the day. To those who have given up any longer or more ambitious form of Meditation, this simple habit of mental prayer may be most earnestly commended. Let no one despise it for its simplicity. It may be the first step in a new effort after a more continual apprehension of God's Presence.

(2) There is another simple form of Meditation, which is possible for those who can give a little more consecutive attention than the first method requires. When you have chosen your passage of Scripture on which to meditate, turn it all into the simplest form of prayer, adapting all the thoughts, as you pray, to your immediate needs. Perhaps an illustration, however simple, may be the best explanation of this way of meditation. Suppose that you have chosen the first incident in the eighth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, the Healing of the Leper. You read quietly the familiar words : " *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him, and behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst*

make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, 'I will, be thou clean,' and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them." Then, in your own simple way, you would translate that incident in our Lord's life directly into a prayer for yourself in some such words as these: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Who wast followed down from the mount of Thy teaching by great multitudes, I would learn of Thee this day, and do come in worship as this leper whom Thou didst heal. Lord, Thou canst make me clean who am covered with the taint of sin. Do Thou put forth Thy hand in mercy and touch me this day, that I may be clean from this sin which I bewail, that my leprosy may be healed. And grant that I may go my way this day in obedience to Thee, and not by words only, but by my deeds, give grateful thanks for my healing, and bear witness of my cleanness for a testimony unto those that know not Thee." In this way we may continually bring before our Lord the remembrance of the incidents of His earthly life and plead them before the Father, and in so doing, we are bringing our own lives into active and fruitful relation to His meritorious Life. All the day long we shall find comfort in anxiety, counsel in difficulty, strength against temptation, encouragement for service, and fortitude to endure suffering, from the ever-present

thought of Christ as the Great Healer. Thus we remind ourselves that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. And the actualities of to-day, the dangers, the conflicts, the joys, the cares of our life are immediately brought into the Presence of God. For a long while, it may be, we ought to practise this form of Meditation.

(3) There is a more ambitious method than this—the one with which many are familiar and with which perhaps we often begin, the failures in which have led to much disappointment. Those who can spend twelve or fifteen minutes on their Meditation may well learn this method, which makes a greater demand upon our will and our use of all the gifts of devotion and love which the Holy Ghost has given us. We take the passage which we have chosen, and read it over slowly. Then we deliberately picture the scene to ourselves with all the fulness that our imagination will allow. If we are alone, let us meditate loud enough to be able to hear our own voice. It will be found to prevent idle dreaming. Let the words find themselves, in the simplest way possible—they will come surely enough if our thoughts are clear, and the very speaking of the words will be found to re-act upon the clearness of our thought. Then when the scene has been simply pictured, and the reality of it brought home, we look to see what the definite points of teaching are for ourselves to-day. For instance, in the incident just chosen, the first point conceivably

might be the thought of the unresting activity of Christ in the work of Salvation. We think of Him passing from the great teaching on the Mount to be thronged with the multitudes whose varied needs He immediately supplies. And we take to ourselves the lesson of His untiring industry, and are moved perhaps to contrition for our want of zeal, our frequent impatience at interruptions, and our selfish way of devoting so much time to our own comfort and culture. There would follow naturally at once a simple prayer that God would keep us from such selfishness to-day, and make us ready to accept the first opportunity of generous service that to-day may offer. The second point might be the thought of our sinfulness, bringing with it perhaps a simple thanksgiving to God for the way in which through the sacramental ministries of His Church He has put forth His hand and touched us, saying, "I will, be thou clean." And the third point, if we had time for another, might be the necessity of obedience as the test of gratitude. At any rate, we would sum up our meditation with some short resolution, to act throughout the day as a remembrance of Christ's Presence and an immediate test of our obedience.

(4) There is another method, too, which is a little harder, but which is often very helpful. That is to meditate, not upon a continuous passage, but upon some one great truth or some one great Word. For instance, one might take the subject of Grace, or

Faith, or Election, or the Will of God. A simple concordance or the use of the references in the margin of the Bible is sufficient to suggest a connection of passages, which will throw a wonderfully new and satisfying light on some of the dark and deep problems of God's teaching. But this, of course, requires more effort and preparation than any of the other methods.

C.

A word as to one or two practical details. One of the greatest causes of failure in Bible-reading or Meditation is the want of certainty as to what passages to read, what course to follow, what subject to pursue. There must be no hesitation here. Mark out your subject clearly for some time ahead, so that you are not left to the weak inspiration of the moment. Take quite simply either the Gospel of S. Mark, or the Parables of S. Matthew, or the last chapters of S. John, or one of the shorter Epistles of S. Paul to begin with. Or follow the guidance of the Church and use the chief incident in one of the Lessons for the Day. Now and then, for the more advanced, a course of Psalms is very full of suggestion. But after the habit has once begun, subjects will not be found to fail.

How long shall our Meditation be? The great test of the proper length of a Meditation is this—it must last long enough for us to get firm grip of one

clear truth. Meditations are often too long, so long that the unity of thought is lost. It must be the unity of thought, not the manifold fulness and variety of thought, that measures the worth of our Meditation. Sometimes the mind and heart are very fresh, inspiration seems to abound and the thoughts flow very quickly. Then the will must be called in to choose and to settle upon one thought out of the many for careful contemplation. And when that one thought has been seized and turned over and looked at, and has become a stimulus to prayer and penitence and thanksgiving and praise, and has been applied to the moment's needs and the prospects of the day's work, then the resolution for the day, clear and definite and strong, suggests itself, and Meditation will have done its work in leading us to closer Fellowship with God through all the day. Five minutes is quite a long while for us when we are just beginning to meditate and our wills are still unused to the strain of attention, and our souls new to the effort of original thought about the things of God. Only let us never tolerate distraction. Let the Meditation be ever so short rather than allow yourself at all in the habit of wilful inattention. Gradually, the time that you need for meditation, the time that you find you can easily use, will increase, till perhaps fifteen minutes, or twenty, become habitual. But always you will set yourself not to meditate for so many

minutes, but to meditate upon some particular subject, and your standard of fruitfulness and success will be, not the length of time, but the clearness and permanence of apprehension with which you have realised one definite truth about God as His message to your soul for this day's guidance.

How often shall we meditate? Perhaps we have expected too much of ourselves, and that has led to disappointment. It is better to make one good meditation every week than to scamp one every day. A good plan is to go on to definite meditation on Wednesdays and Fridays, as soon as the weekly meditation is established. Then gradually, as opportunity offers, meditation can become more frequent. It will increase especially as our reception of the Blessed Eucharist becomes more frequent. The Blessed Sacrament gives us the power to meditate, and is itself the supreme reason why we need to meditate. It is only by such an individual offering of all our faculties to the personal apprehension of God that we are able to correspond to the grace which God gives us. The Eucharist without Meditation has not its full power over our lives.

Meditation, we can never forget, is the work of the Holy Ghost in us. We shall always begin with a prayer to the Holy Ghost. We shall always be content with what the Holy Ghost each time allows us of comfort and of counsel. Sometimes we cannot feel that we are deriving any happiness or any

strength from our meditation. But let us always be quite sure of this, that if we give up our wills to God, our meditation can never fail. God can use, and bless, even the dullness and the coldness, if we make the oblation of our wills and trust to the "unutterable groanings" of our indwelling Advocate, the Holy Ghost, to express the devotion of our hearts. "I have set God always before me; He is at my right hand, therefore I shall not be moved."

D.

I should like to append some beautiful words which we owe to the pen of Father Waggett. They express in a wonderful way the fellowship with God which may be realised by our meditation. After speaking of the threefold use of the Bible as a Summary of Christian Truth, the Treasury of Christian Prayer, and the Guide to the Christian Life of Devotion, he says that the work of Bible reading is just a fulfilment of Browning's words, "Pouring heaven into this shut house of life." And then he adds: "Suppose a new and better Lucian, a *Dialogues of the Dead*, which brought us, not in fancy, but in spiritual reality into the presence of the great ones of old. Suppose a Plato of such magic that, as we read in it, our door opened to the knock of Socrates. Such books would even in their own lower sphere be less powerful than the Bible actually is in the highest of all. For as a man reads in this, Christ is made verily apparent as

He is ever near; a door is opened in heaven and our earth is holy with the supreme visitation. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' Can any account be given of these things? How is it that certain parts of Scripture, and for happy souls a growing variety of parts, do in simple reading unlock the doors of this shut house of life, disperse the mists of sense, the clouds of sin and grief, and bring the All, the One, the Alone Blessed, home to the soul? Is it because the Presence is always near, pressing for an entrance, waiting for recognition; but our natures, tuned to other and lower apprehensions, are as completely unaware of the beauty in which we live, as our ears are insensitive to the vibrations of ether, as our hands are incapable of perceiving the currents of the most powerful magnet—currents or stresses in the fields of ether which can set a mass of iron in such motion as would crush out of recognition the body which is totally unaffected by the currents themselves? The strongest magnet yields no message to our nerves. The Great Presence folds us in and the perverted or even the natural heart is unaware of it. But the Word which comes from God in the very language and feeling of our nature lays hold on us from Him. The language is ours, the tongue not of angels, but of men; yet it vibrates in the divine rhythm. This vibration, this rhythmical movement it conveys to us. It addresses, it finds and re-awakens the regenerate in us, the heavenly witness. And the soul—thus tuned by

means of sense and words and listening mind, tuned in those deep regions which produce no words and yield no message to the plumb-line of discourse—the soul is so far set in unison with the Divine movement that, of a sudden, as a bell brought into sympathy at once sounds out the note which lingered unheard in the air, so suddenly our nature is aware of that which unknown besets it; and we reckon for an advent that which is in truth the emergence of the spiritual organs of apprehension into the flood of real experience."

It is thus that Meditation awakens new powers of daily fellowship with Christ, and leads on to the full realisation of all those new energies of grace and truth of which His blessed Sacraments are the appointed channels.

IX

DEATH

DEATH must be regarded by the Christian as the Gateway to the wider fellowship of Paradise. Death becomes not an end, but a beginning.

How paralysing the thought of Death must have been, before Christ revealed its meaning and stripped it of its terrors. All that lay beyond the grave seemed too dim, too uncertain and unreal to provoke the enthusiasm of the pagan world. For the wise, this life held problems enough; for the rest, there were pleasures which absorbed all their energies; the future might take care of itself. The great philosophers of the far East, in whose deeper thought the future existence of the soul was not forgotten, conceived that individual absorption in the Infinity of God must be the great end of human life. To the Jew, death was an unwelcome messenger, ushering him into a shadowy land of bare existence, where intercourse with God and his fellows altogether ceased. Upon a world thus darkened with perplexity, void of hope and lost in fear, there broke the bright light of the Christian revelation of Death. Death was not the end of life, not the loss of individuality, not the denial of all inter-

course. Death was the entrance into ampler fellowship of life. Death led to the perfection of all the powers of human personality. Through Death man passed to the satisfaction of all his deepest social instincts and found fellowship with God and all mankind.

A.

And, old as the message is for us, we too need to remember more often that Death is not the end, but the beginning. This world is but the preparation for the fuller life that shall be. *Here* is not the scene of the perfect fulfilment of the Divine Will. The accomplishment of that Will lies beyond. *There* we look for victory, *there* lies achievement. And when the hindrances come, and God's good work seems almost overborne, when our powers of active service become strangely impaired in hours of sickness and infirmity, then it is stimulating to all our faculties to remember that Death is not the end. Here God tests and trains our character, and leads the will to true obedience, and guides the soul with ever-growing hope, that, when death comes, we may at once with quickened love and firm-set will, embrace the wider opportunities of the ampler life.

For it will be just our very Self that passes on through the gate of death into the land of life. Death itself will not change our personality. The ego, the self, the "I," passes on, unchanged by Death. The act of dying, the separation of soul and body,

makes no moral change, works no purifying miracle. Death indeed hands on the soul into a sphere where the quickened energies of the Holy Spirit have opportunities of more unhindered sway, where the possibilities of enrichment for all the faculties of the soul are increased. But Death itself works no enrichment. Death itself is no process of spiritual development. It separates soul and body for a while, in hope of a future reunion in which each shall find its perfect consummation of bliss. Death gives the opportunity, but Death does not create the bliss.

And mostly through avenues of pain Death lets us through into the larger life. That is our experience as sinful men. Often Death comes as the happy climax of an earthly life that has been racked with agonies and pain. Death, as we know it, is hardly separate from infirmity, distress, and pain. That is our universal experience. Yet reverently we can imagine what Death might perhaps have been to those who were created in the very image of God, if there had not been the sad breach of sin. We only know Death under the conditions of sin. The Death which the sinless One endured was the Death which human sin had prepared for Him. But we read how for His Sinless Body there was "no corruption," no decay, but the marvellous transfiguring which from the sepulchre of Death released "His Glorious Body," the Body of the Resurrection. And we can imagine how, maybe, had there been no sin,

even the physical agonies of Death had been spared us, and by a gradual process of ever-growing glory, the human body would have been transfigured, as its fellowship with the Incarnate became deepened, till, without infirmity or pain, a fit and expressive instrument for the sinless soul, it should attain its heavenly consummation of perfect union with God.

Yet, sinners as we are, and dying as we must under conditions of weakness and of pain, we find that Christ has indeed taken away the sting of Death and robbed the grave of its Victory. Three great terrors of Death has Christ removed. He has taken away its *unnaturalness*. Death had seemed an unnatural breach in an ordered progress, a sudden halt in a great advance. Death had seemed to shut the door of hope and to blast so many a promise. But Christ has shown how Death is no sudden arrest of growth, no reversal of life's ways, no check to the highest attainment, but just the next step in an ordered advance, the freeing of new capacities, the fulfilment of man's destiny.

And Christ has taken away the cloud of *mystery* that darkened the thought of Death. The old world indeed might speak despairingly of that far land from which no traveller returned. There was a time when men might fear the mystery of the Unknown beyond the grave. But now One has returned—returned triumphant. And He says that Death is just a "going home"—home to the Father's arms. *This*

land is really more strange to us than that, for *there* is the abiding Home for which we were eternally destined, for which we were lovingly made.

And that last sting of Death, its *loneliness*, has been taken away by Christ, that fear which has wrung the heart of the bravest, that great dread which solemnised Pascal as he said, "I die alone." True, indeed, that in the weakness of Death we may lose consciousness for a while of human fellowship; but when human hands loose us, angelic hands receive us, and Christ Himself guides us through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. And of the certainty of that felt companionship how many of us have been allowed glad witness. We have marked the glow of happiness, the smile of recognition that kindles in the face of the dying, to whom the vision of angelic ministries is granted, to whom Christ makes fresh revelation of Himself.

With true insight has the great poet in "Gareth and Lynette" drawn the picture of Death as the Christian knight must ever find it. Last of all his foes Gareth comes upon Death, tricked out in all the fearful imageries of black funereal pomp—"High on a night-black horse in night-black arms, with white breast bones and barren ribs of Death." But when the knight, meeting his foe "in the dim dawn," has charged home and brought Death to the ground, away fall the trappings of terror and there issues "the bright face of a blooming boy, fresh as a flower

newborn." Black Death stands revealed as radiant Hope. So may we meet Death in the power of Christ and find all its terrors gone.

B.

That must be the general attitude of hope and faith with which we look forward to Death. With all reverence and humility it is possible to suggest one or two more detailed counsels of help and comfort which it may be of service to remember at the imminent approach of Death itself.

What is the right preparation for Death? Undoubtedly, the best preparation is always to live in the Presence of God. To live from day to day with the will fresh set towards obedience, and the face turned upward, and the heart ever drawing in fresh grace through the sacramental channels of God's love, this is to be ready for God's call, come when and how it may. This is the spirit of the old lay brother who was found by the Abbot thatching a barn upon the monastery farm. "Brother Hubert," said the Abbot, "God has shown me in a vision this night that to-day He will call thee to thy rest. Come, quit thy work, prepare to meet thy God." "With thy leave, Father," replied the worker, "I would that God might find me at my work." The Abbot bowed and left him reverently working, and the thatching was wellnigh done when God called the brother home. But this is doubtless ideal. We seldom live

in such readiness for death. Yet it remains true that the best preparation for death is a good life.

But what shall be the ordering of our days when, perhaps, through gradually growing weakness God leads us slowly down to the Valley of the Shadow of Death? How shall we prepare our soul for those last moments of earthly life? The Church in her Office of Visitation of the Sick tells us that we must be at peace with men. With true and practical wisdom we are warned to make every preparation which love can dictate for the due settlement of all our earthly possessions. The earthly fellowship which we leave has its responsibilities and claims. Not only are we to be at peace in our hearts with all men, and nourish neither malice nor the spirit of unforgiving ill-will, but we are, by written word and by verbal direction, to arrange that no cause of dispute or difference can arise, that shall mar the peace of those we leave behind. There will be a very delicate and far-seeing thoughtfulness for others that will mark the mellowed love of our last days. And wisely the Rubric runs: "But men should often be put in remembrance to take order for the settling of their temporal estates whilst they are in health." And the settling of the soul at peace with God must not be left too late. We are too apt at the beginning of our illness to set aside the special care of spiritual things until such weakness has set in, that effective and calm spiritual effort is very difficult and almost

impossible. The words of our Prayer Book are very emphatic as to the full cleansing which the soul needs at such a time of peril. "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter." The troubled conscience must have the ease of God's Pardon. And then the cleansed soul will need the Viaticum of the Blessed Sacrament to sustain it through the new experience of death. In the death-chamber of one whose soul is thus fortified by the precious Body and Blood of Christ, there reigns a spirit of tranquil calm. Perhaps unconsciousness sets in soon. But that does not break the peace of the soul. Those who are with us at that hour will kneel by our side and soothe us with familiar prayer and wonted psalm and simple litany. And though we cannot join with them, nor show by movement, sign, or speech, that we can hear, yet the words of their prayer will pierce through the veil of unconsciousness and cheer our spirit with their tones of faith and humble penitence, and we shall rejoice to feel with what confidence they commend us to the care of Him, Whom we are beginning already to know with deeper intimacy. And as the spirit speeds its way from the frail body, the Prayer of Commendation will be said, which commends our soul into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour. Or maybe, some one will bid us farewell in the simple words which antiquity has

hallowed: "Go forth, Christian Soul, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." And so the peace of that last hour on earth will prepare the way for the deepening peace upon which we shall enter in the land of Paradise.

There is much that is very dark, and suggestive of painful mystery, for those who attend the bedside of the dying. But those whose duty brings them often there enjoy many consolations. There is reassurance, for instance, for those who in life are weighed down with the physical fear of death. For many, this dread is almost a lifelong torture. But never does it continue at the moment when God is actually calling the soul. It is natural with us that there should be this physical shrinking. Christ Himself, in all His sinlessness, experienced that human dread of death, as part of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. But when God calls the soul, He makes the new home to which He calls us attractive and desired. He looses us from the old attraction of this life. Slowly He turns our face from the things of earth to the things beyond, and the vision begins to dawn upon us with winning appeal. Have we not seen the smile of happy recognition and joyous expectancy, the smile that slowly spreads over the face of the dying? God is showing them something of the Vision of Himself which hitherto has been withheld, and they are drawn on with irresistible content. And in those last hours, we, who are witnesses of the

revelation which God is making, must remember that the soul does now *want* to go. Hitherto, and rightly, it has clung to earth, because God's call has not been made manifest. But now that the call is clear, the soul leaps to the new vision and thrills with the calm enjoyment of its God, and you and I must stand aside and not seek to call the spirit back, nor rouse it from the tranquil apprehension of God's peace. We watch and pray, and bow our heads, and note God's faithfulness and Christ's Victory over the terrors of death, and ask for hearts so deeply confident of God's love that we can bear the pang of separation for the certainty of our loved one's greater happiness.

The approach of Death opens the way for a quickening of the Holy Spirit's work in the soul. Even though unconsciousness may break the sensible link with earthly things, the life of the soul goes on in its deeper sphere of Godward consciousness. In all times of bodily weakness, we can fall back on the certainty that the Holy Spirit "helpeth our infirmities," not only voicing for us those Godward aspirations which are beyond the soul's own power to utter, but quickening all the activities of the soul. God seems sometimes, in these states of mental unconsciousness, to call the soul aside out of the rush and turmoil of earthly interests and relations, that He may deal with it in undistracted solitude. We tread, I know, on mysterious ground when we try to penetrate the

realm of unconsciousness, but some of us have had such experience of God's dealings with the souls of men, while their minds have been unconscious of all earthly things, that we cannot falter in our witness to the certain quickening of the Holy Spirit's action in the human soul in times of special bodily infirmity. And this may be a great source of comfort. When *we* cannot reach them, *God* suffers no hindrance, and the gracious ministry of His Holy Spirit can bring them the succours of Divine Refreshment.

Perhaps the thought of the certainty of this ministry will help us to remember what medical experience does not fail to impress upon us—that very many of those painful signs of physical distress, which accompany the last hours, do not really betoken felt suffering and agony, but are just the muscular and mechanical movements of the body, of which the real self is unconscious, engaged as it is in a realm of far deeper experience, and engrossed in an intercourse of spirit with Spirit, which no bodily sensations can disturb.

C.

Certainly Death calls for as much faith in those who are left, as in those who pass from our midst. But surely if we do believe, as we profess, that the life beyond is a fuller life, an ampler opportunity, a nearer realisation of God, then when God calls our friends to take up the higher work, the one and only harm that we can do, is to withhold our own acceptance of God's will.

We must acquiesce in God's loving purpose for them. Bereavement is a vocation for us, as much as Death is a call for them. And we must faithfully accept it. Sorrow we must. God knows that. But despair we must not. Sad we shall be, but sullen, never. Yet how many could point to lives, hitherto generous, happy, beneficent, unselfish, which at the touch of bereavement have folded in upon themselves in querulous self-pity, have called earth to witness to the hardness of their lot, have become peevish, restless, self-centred, morose, and have drifted quite from the old moorings of happy certainty and trust in the love of God. Death is the sure touchstone of our faith. Yet we may be sure that our one chance of helping the new life of those who have been called from us, of having real intercourse with them such as God allows, of preparing ourselves for that reunion of love which God has promised, is to accept God's vocation of bereavement for ourselves on earth, with the same confidence and thankfulness with which we have rejoiced to see them meet their Vocation of Death. For each of us, it means a fuller life and wider fellowship. For them, an ampler opportunity in the new realms of spiritual service, where the Lord God giveth them light, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, where love grows ever more and more. For us, a fuller life on earth, because our souls will be dedicated to God's greater service with new faith, with new in-

centive, with quickened response to the intercessions which rise perpetually from the loved and holy penitents of Paradise. Faber has put words upon our lips that we might learn to sing :—

"How pleasant are thy paths, O Death,
Straight to our Father's Home.
All loss were gain that gained us this,
The sight of God, that single bliss
Of the grand world to come."

Yes, that is Death's great gift—the sight of God. But that gift is for us as well as for the dead. Death calls us who remain to a new sight of God now in this life, that the rest of our days on earth may be illumined with the splendid vision of God's love. Then, pleasant indeed will be the call of Death. We shall be going home.

"So not alone we land upon that shore,
'Twill be as though we had been there before.
We shall meet more we know
Than we can meet below,
And find our rest like some returning dove,
And be at home at once with our Eternal Love."

CHAPTER X

THE FELLOWSHIP OF PARADISE

THE more frequent remembrance of the land of Paradise would often help to solve some of the difficult problems which beset us in thinking of the Divine government of the world, the training of human character, and the growth and maintenance of fellowship after death.

A.

In our conception of the Divine Will, we must take into account the realm of Paradise. Again and again we seem bewildered by the hindrances which obstruct the fulfilment of the Will of God in this life. We recognise that what we men can see in action here is always the Permissive Will of God, not His Absolute Will. That is to say, God is always seen redressing the evil which the misuse of man's freewill has brought about. Because we only know the world under the conditions of sin, and we know that no sin can be according to God's Will, therefore we can have no experience of God's Absolute Will, as it is apart from man's self-chosen perversion of his freedom. The infinite resources of the Divine Will

suffice abundantly to come to the rescue of man's self-inflicted injury and wrong. We are always watching the lowliness of the Divine action in the work of readjustment and recovery. And in the slow patience of God's working we often lose the sense of His certain victory. Repeatedly our hopes are baffled by the checks, the rebuffs, and the defeats, which the forces of good suffer in the conflict with the powers of evil. Causes, which we know must be dear to the Divine Heart, suffer sudden reverse or make such halting progress, that our faith in the sovereignty, or the goodness, of the Divine Will is overclouded. Then we must remember that we can only understand the purpose and the character of the Will of God, when we extend the horizon of our view beyond the narrow limits of this earthly life, and take in the far distances of Paradise and the eternities of Heaven. God's Will is sovereign and supreme beyond the confines of this universe. One Divine purpose embraces all, and the victory which seems to elude our grasp here, is assured in the ultimate fulfilment of God's purpose in the world to come. When Christ upon the Cross revealed to the dying robber the land of Paradise, He opened to his gaze and to ours the vision of the assured victory of God's loving and sovereign Will. This is a thought of comfort in many an hour of seeming failure.

B.

Paradise solves many of those difficulties which harass us as we think of the salvation of those who have no knowledge of the Incarnate Christ in this life. There are two classes of people who are in our thoughts in this connection. There are the heathen, beyond the reach of the news of the Gospel, and there are those in our own midst, moving in and out daily among all the manifold activities of the Faith of the Incarnation, who are yet impervious to the message of the Gospel, whose lives do not accord with the traditional ideals of devotion and religious conviction. Is this world, indeed, for such as these, the limit of probation? Is this the end of their hope? The answer is Yes, this is the land of probation, but we ourselves are not judges in any case of what the result of that probation is. This is the land where the character is set, beyond is the land where the character ripens and develops. With regard to the heathen, we know that the Light which lighteneth every man has given to each the illumination of Conscience and of Reason. By that light they are judged, who have had no opportunity of the knowledge of the Gospel. They "perish" out of this life "in blindness and ignorance." But that blindness and ignorance will not be their eternal portion. The revelation which St. Peter makes of the activities of Christ in Paradise is a hint sufficient to us of what is in store for those who have

not known the Incarnation. Christ proclaimed to the souls of those, who had passed away before His coming, the good news of the Incarnation. So in Paradise, to those who have not known the Gospel, will Christ proclaim the truth of His Incarnation, perhaps immediately and directly by the glory of His nearer Presence, perhaps mediately and indirectly through the fellowship of other souls to whom He is already known in His Incarnate Glory. And those souls, who in this life have begun to respond to the dim light which was vouchsafed them here, who have lived up to the ideals of righteousness, which they have gained, however imperfectly, who have set their wills to do the right and love the good as they have known it—such souls will then open out in glad and joyous response to the manifestation of the Incarnate. He will present Himself to them in all the winning appeal of His full self-revelation. Thus they will enter upon the knowledge of God and be transformed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. And of those, who in our very midst to-day seem to the end of their earthly lives irresponsive to the message of Christ, we must say this. Their probation is indeed here. But God alone can tell whether they have made conscious and full rejection of His grace. God alone knows how the message of His love may have been hindered by hereditary forces, never subjected to the influences of right education. God alone knows the difficulties of

an environment, uncongenial to their true development, the hindrances of subtle mental affliction. All the power of response of which they are capable, all the defeated efforts to rise up to the light, all the hidden conquests over myriad forms of interior selfishness, these may be known to God alone. This only we can say with certainty in the light of the knowledge of Paradise. Be the outward life what it may, no soul has proved itself beyond the reach of salvation, until it has with full and complete knowledge, with deliberate purpose and out of a set love of evil, rejected the appeal of the Incarnate Christ. Christ will make Himself known to each in the attractiveness of that revelation, which is alone for sinful men the full and sufficient proof of the Divine Love and the Divine Holiness. And if it may be that for many souls in this life there comes no full opportunity of such revelation, then by their use of what opportunities they really had, will they be judged. And if to those they have at all responded, if there has been no wanton, wilful, deliberate rejection of the good which has been known as good, then for them there will come joy at the revelation of Paradise which will unveil to them the knowledge of the Incarnate Saviour. God wills all men to be saved. Men may reject God's will for them. But neither the Church as a whole, nor any member of the Church, can say whether this or that man has actually and finally made such a rejection. The scope of the

Church-prayers is therefore as wide as the embrace of Christ's atoning Redemption. Christ died for all men. The Church prays for all men. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the pleading of Christ's death for all men. No limit can be placed to the scope of that Divine Intercession. Whether the objects of that Intercession are specifically mentioned, or fail of definite articulation, in the liturgies of the Church, the Offering of the Eucharist is in itself an Act of Intercession, which perpetuates the pleading of the one all-atoning Death.

And the effect of that Intercession pours its healing and strengthening virtues through the ranks of all the quick and the dead, and binds together this world and the land of Paradise in a new fellowship of love.

C.

There are one or two questions also which sorrowing hearts often ask, to which some answers may be reverently suggested, although they are beyond the open and definite revelation which God has given to the Church, and must therefore be regarded as matter of pious meditation, not of necessary faith.

There is, first, the question of recognition in the life beyond. Shall we know our friend who has gone before us? Perhaps he will have been long in the land of Paradise and will be very near perfection. Will he know us? Perhaps our shrinking hearts are

a little too timid to take the full comfort of the assurance of CHRIST'S welcome. But *our friend's* welcome, we should like to be able to count on that. Will he be there to welcome us? May we look for his greeting to make that strange land home for us? Well, there can be no doubt, from our Lord's own words to the dying thief, that Paradise is a land of Recognition. Our Lord passed to Paradise before the thief. Afterwards when he was released from his long agony, he was to find and recognise our Saviour there, finding and recognising Him in His Manhood. We need no other assurance of recognition than that. But perhaps we may see also there the conditions of recognition. We must have spiritual knowledge of one another here. In that land of spirits no mere carnal, fleshly, outward knowledge on earth can avail surely for spiritual recognition there. All ties that are merely sensual, all relations that are not based upon some intimacy of soul with soul, but upon interests of selfish gain or brutish pleasure, these can never be the guarantee of future recognition, where all that is bodily is absent and the soul stands naked in its spirit-nature. But where there has been love, the real outgoing of self into the heart of another, whether that other has been able here to respond to the deep call of that love or not, there will be recognition. For no future growth will ever destroy the insight which true love has given here. Love pierces the outward show of life and sees the soul beneath, sees

what it can be, what it shall be. Love idealises, and idealising reads the truth. We may smile sometimes at the picture which true love draws of one whom we ourselves cannot look upon with such affection. But, after all, that is the true picture, and nearest Christ's own view of the soul. And love will grow in Paradise. And just as in this world love can trace in the lines of broken life and character the very features of the Christ, so shall it be when we in our unworthiness pass through the gates of Paradise. There will be those holier ones, who will welcome us with the smile of Love's recognition, and there will be those others too, in whom we find the hopes of our own idealising love actually fulfilled in a closer likeness to Christ than ever we had dreamed. So shall the love of this life—"what was our Life of Life when here"—be crowned in Paradise in full recognition and the mutual revelation of our truest selves.

D.

But other questions centre round the thought of the long waiting of Paradise. Will not the waiting and the long delay be a source of unhappiness to those souls who need our presence for their fullest joy?

On the very threshold of meditation upon the world beyond we must always pause to remember that after all we have only mortal words and earthly pictures to describe what is really beyond our comprehending. We can only speak of things as we know them in the

sphere of time. Faintly indeed must they reflect the truth of what shall be when there is no more time. The conditions of the timeless state must be beyond our full apprehension. God alone has the timeless, eternal vision of all things.

> "With the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour,
> Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought to thought,
> Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now."

And though mortal sight, even in the world beyond, never can attain to the eternal vision which God enjoys, yet we must imagine that it will approximate so closely as to transcend all the earthly limitations of the slowly revolving years. So that while for us, who remain on earth, each day of mourning is as a thousand years, maybe for the souls in Paradise there is little sense of waiting, but for them a thousand years are as one day. God grant it may be so.

Then the question comes to us, How far do the sorrows and sins of this earth affect the joy of those in Paradise? Is the intercourse so close that my unworthiness and my dejection and disloyalty can cast a shadow upon the happier life of those I love? Undoubtedly words fail us to express the intense reality of the Fellowship of the Church, which is so intimate and so living that no one individual can neglect his own spiritual life, nor sin against his own soul, without inflicting suffering and loss upon the whole Body. The Church in Paradise as well as the Church on earth is stronger and holier and happier

and more steadfast in the realisation of Christ's Presence, if I am keeping near to Christ. There is no doubt whatever about that. But the loving and anxious heart presses the question further home. Granted that there is joy in Paradise over every sinner that repenteth, granted that each act of earthly obedience and holiness increases the sum of happiness for the departed, does my dear friend know that it is I who have caused that new thrill of happiness in the unselfish love of the whole Body? Does he know that he owes that happiness under God to me? And does my sin cause him pain and grief, and blot out some of the happiness of his new life? Does he know all the doings of my life to-day? Does he watch me as I go in and out?

The answer to this must be incomplete, but I think we can say enough both to reassure us of their happiness and to give ourselves a strong motive for effort and holiness. Of course, though they are spirit now, and for a while apart from the limitations of the body, yet they are not ubiquitous. They have not the omnipresence nor the omniscience of God. They have but finite powers. And it seems that all their knowledge of the earth must be mediated through Christ alone. Upon His face their eyes are fixed; upon Him alone they gaze, and there, as in a mirror, He shows them what He would have them know of earthly things. Surely this will be one of the ministrations of the Holy

Spirit, Who will carry on into the world beyond His great work as the Light-bearer, showing us the things of Jesus—what Jesus would have us know of the life of them that are His. And may it not be that, as far as the knowledge of individual actions of those on earth is concerned, Christ would only make known to each soul in Paradise those individual acts of their loved ones which He Himself chooses to be made known? Whatever is needed for their growth and happiness, that Christ reveals to them. Thus is it ever in the power of each one of us here to do such acts of love and holiness as Christ shall deem worthy of revealing to them there, and so may our deeds of love bring an individual thrill of undimmed happiness to their souls, and draw them in knowledge nearer to ourselves and in thankfulness nearer yet to Christ. And when we sin and are beneath ourselves, we belie our love for them, for we keep back a new and added gladness which might be theirs. Every act of love and obedience thus binds us nearer to the love of Paradise, and knits closer the union between quick and dead.

And sometimes we wonder if the happiness of Paradise is not dashed by the pain of separation. Surely a needless wonder. When we impute the sorrow and sadness of our own earthly experience of separation, we are forgetting that the life of Paradise is a life of fuller knowledge and fuller faith. We sorrow here because we cannot trust God fully. We

are not really sure that God is doing the best for us in taking away our friend—the best for him, no doubt, but hardly the best for us. But in Paradise the souls see more of the true purpose of God, they enter more fully into the mind of Christ, and the secrets of the divine government of the world begin to be opened to their faith. And they know that the separation is best, absolutely best, not only for themselves, but for those they love as well. God has a work to do with each, which He can only do with them while they are parted. And with this new knowledge they cannot be sad at the separation, but they must even rejoice, and pray that we on earth may have faith to believe now what has become so plain to them. They must be praying for our greater trust and our ready and cheerful acceptance of God's discipline, that we may be worthier of a speedy reunion, and that the consummation of our mutual love may be hastened.

We must always speak with great hesitation where God has granted no full revelation. But it is possible reverently to answer the anxious questionings of many souls, carefully distinguishing between the clear, distinct outlines of the definite teaching of the Church on the life of Paradise and the reverent meditations of the devout soul. Only of this one thing we may be sure. The knowledge of things divine is a progressive knowledge, and the revelation about the future world is one of the later stages in

God's manifestation of Himself to us. In proportion as we keep near to God in this life, in proportion as we realise Christ's Presence here and keep close to Him in the regular sacramental life, so will be our growth in the knowledge of what His nearer Presence must mean to the souls in Paradise. As we keep close to Christ, we keep closest to them. As we do most for Christ here, so do we most help them there. If we are impatient at the reserve of God's revelation, if we rebel at the seeming obscurity, perhaps we are trying to understand the last lessons before we have begun to learn the first.

XI

THE FELLOWSHIP OF PEACE

"MAY they rest in peace." "Jesu, mercy." These are the simple and pregnant words with which many of us have learned to pray for those whom God has already called to the fuller life and more perfect service of the land of Paradise. The reserve which the Bible maintains with regard to the future life is very striking, but it is so distinct a feature in God's revelation that it must be respected. It is too prominent and too startling to be without purpose. Whatever its cause may be—whether the danger of distracting us from our daily duty by the happiness of the future prospect, or the utter inefficiency of human language to express the glory that shall be, or the need of disciplining man's curiosity and allowing room for the full exercise of real faith—whatever the reason, the reserve is there, and we must accept it as God's purposed training for us. We walk by faith and not by sight.

A.

Yet with regard to the *peace* of the waiting soul in Paradise, we have very sure ground of knowledge in

the experience of the Perfect Man, Christ Jesus. There open out to us two sources of certain knowledge.

First, we have the words of our Lord to the penitent robber on the Cross: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Before that night closed, there would be two lifeless bodies hanging on those crosses, and two human spirits, one sin-stained but penitent, the other sinless and radiant, would be together in the land of the Departed. "With Me," not in the sense in which, in the power of His Deity, the Son of God is omnipresent, but "with Me," in human proximity, according to the limitations which He has stooped to accept in His Incarnation. As surely as those two human bodies were hanging together there for all to see, so surely would those two human spirits be together in Paradise—Jesus, in His perfect Humanity, the thief in his very self, their identity unchanged, their personality preserved, the continuity of life unbroken.

In the second place, we have the words of S. Peter, in which he says Christ was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

Significant it is that the revelation comes from S. Peter. Of all the Apostles none was more practical, none more matter-of-fact, none less likely to be moved by sentiment or to mistake the imaginings of pious ecstasy for the sober realities of re-

ligious truth. Characteristic it is also, that the disciple who had been most unwearied in pursuing the strenuous bodily activities of the earthly ministry should be the one to reveal the higher spiritual activities of our Lord's human soul in the land of Paradise.

The very context of the Apostle's words shows how he realised that this activity of Christ in His quickened human spirit was the charter of hope for our own spiritual activity, when body and soul are separated by death. For he is holding up our Lord as our Example, not only of suffering, but of life through death. Assuredly it is in the power of His quickened Manhood, not merely in the power of His Deity, that Christ performed this ministry in Paradise. As God, in the power of the Divine Omnipresence, Christ, in the Unity of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, had ever been present in the world of spirits. There was wanting no new presence of His Deity. But what was new was the introduction into Paradise of the perfect human Soul, which by the Incarnation the Divine Person of the Son had taken for ever to Himself. It was the entrance of the Representative Man, sinless, in all the activities of the human soul, perfectly and fully responding to the quickening gifts of the Holy Spirit given to His perfect Manhood without measure. It was thus the consecration of Paradise as the land through which all souls must pass as they wait for the glorious reunion of soul

and body at the last great Easter Day. As we hope for the great Easter Day, so we rest also in the certainty of our own Easter Eve in Paradise. We, too, when we are allowed to commend our spirits into the Hands of our Heavenly Father, look to receive the quickening of our human spirits through the energies of the Holy Spirit of God, and with our souls thus invigorated, purified, strengthened, we, too, hope to find rest in the activity of those spiritual ministries in Paradise, which God has prepared for us to fulfil.

For our future, therefore, Christ's own example is as comforting as it is convincing. But the question, which human love even more than reverent curiosity proposes, has to do with the present rather than the future. How close is the relationship between the life of our loved ones in Paradise and the life of us who remain on earth?

For the answer to this we turn unhesitatingly to the unbroken witness of the Church's life and teaching. In the very first years, before the promise of Christ's second coming was understood, there were misconceptions as to the Future Life which we find S. Paul very strenuously combating. It was feared that those who died before the great Parousia, or Coming of the Lord, would not be able to share in His Triumph. And in the great chapter on the Resurrection which forms the Lesson in our Burial Service, as well as in his letter to the Thessalonians

S. Paul sets himself to correct this very error. He feels his own example most convincing. "I die daily." But he would have been the last to expose himself to this daily peril of death, if by dying he was to forfeit his share in the great Resurrection. No, those who are departed already are not lost. They are with Christ. They will rise first. Christ will bring them with Him. It is indeed those on earth who will be the least ready for that Coming. In their case the change, which has been gradual with the others and effected through death, will be immediate; their Paradise will be but the twinkling of an eye, "we shall be changed," and together all will be caught up to be for ever with the Lord.

That stage of misconception soon passed, and Christians were left with the clear conviction that there was such a reality as *the waiting Church.* At once this belief showed itself in worship and conduct. The one link which all could appreciate between all parts of the Church was Prayer. The one universal act of corporate Prayer was the Holy Eucharist. There, then, the belief in the unbroken intercourse between the seen and the unseen members of the Church expressed itself. In each Church, it seems, at the Great Intercession, the Priest took in his hands the Diptychs, and read from them the individual names of those for whom the prayers of the Church were asked. The Diptychs, as their very name implies, were two-folded tablets; two-folded, for, as they lay

open to be read, on one fold were the names of the departed, who had a special association with that particular church, Bishops, Priests, Benefactors or others who had now passed from the worship of earth to the worship of Paradise; on the other fold were the names of the living, for whom the special prayers of the Church were asked. Such a thing as a single-sided prayer tablet with prayers only for the living at the Eucharist would have been unknown to any Christian Church. Indeed, if either of the folds had been empty, it would have been that the living had not stated any special need, not that the faithful departed had been forgotten. Thus in all her Liturgies, in prayers unsurpassed for their rich simplicity and beauty, the Church bore witness to the intimate communion between earth and Paradise. This witness, through the upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was sadly marred in part of the Western Church, but never broken. In our own Church not only has our Liturgy been spared to bear its clear witness to this primitive truth, but a long and continuous succession of the best English Divines has borne testimony to this precious heritage of the Catholic faith, and the last few years of our own century have seen a growing appreciation of its truth and beauty.

So much may be said briefly of the unhesitating witness of the Church. Not only in the Apostles' Creed do we bear witness to the fact and the im-

portance of Christ's entry into Paradise, when we say "He descended into hell," but at every Eucharist we bind faster the intercourse between living and departed.

B.

Since the life beyond is in real unbroken continuity with this life, only possessing new elements of spiritual intensity and progress, we can gather something of its nature from our own experience of what this life, even in its imperfection, can offer. S. Paul has said that for "every man that worketh good" God holds in store three great gifts—"glory, honour, and *peace*." From our present experience of the peace, which God gives us in this life, we can form a very true idea of the peace of the intenser life beyond.

The peace of this world is threefold :—

(1) *Peace with God.*—That is the peace of accepted union with Christ. He is our Peace. It is the peace of those who are "accepted in the Beloved," whose sins are forgiven ; the Peace of those who have thrown down their arms and surrendered to the victorious King of Love ; the peace of faith, of tranquil hope and firm reliance upon the divine promises ; the peace of patient service ; the peace of fruitful communion ; the peace of constant prayer ; the peace of a life lived in the conscious Presence of Christ.

(2) *Peace with self.*—This means the true adjustment of all the faculties of our nature; the unifying of all our powers; the harmony of all our energies; the reconciling of all those contradictory impulses which seem almost to divide the personality into rival selves. It is that conquest of self in which the indwelling Holy Spirit plays so important a part. It enables the whole self to direct all its undivided activities with concentrated purpose upon the work in hand.

(3) *Peace with man.*—This is the unselfish Fellowship of love, the joy and happiness of social intercourse which leads to the mutual development of man's powers. It is that self-sacrificing service of our fellows which means the higher realisation of each man's best self; that losing of the soul which means its truest finding.

It is just this very peace, in these same threefold relations, which is deepened and developed in the life beyond. At the moment of death the soul that has sought peace in this life passes on, its identity unshaken, unimpaired, to find *Peace with God.*

Here the experience of Christ will only go part of the way for us, for He was sinless and we are sinful. He ever had in His perfect Manhood unbroken communion with the Father. But even that sinless Humanity was capable of a "quickened" energy of spiritual life when it passed beyond the grave. That Humanity which from the moment of conception

was filled with the Holy Spirit, endowed with the gift of the Spirit "without measure," had yet been able to receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the work of His public Ministry, and now it can be newly quickened in the life of Paradise. So even in His sinlessness Christ's example speaks to us of that quickening of the holy life-giving Spirit which awaits our sin-stained souls in Paradise. For us, too, there will be the intensified activity of the Holy Spirit. Sin will oppose no barriers then to the pure energies of holiness. The soul will yield itself in penitence to the cleansing application of the Precious Blood which the ministries of the Holy Spirit afford.

The purgatorial fire of that holy discipline is the fire of the Holy Spirit, leading the soul out through all the pains of lowliest penitence to the happiness of perfect sanctification. There will be growth in purification as the soul "with unveiled face reflects as a mirror the glory of the Lord, and is transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." And as there is growth in the peace of holiness, there is growth also in the peace of knowledge. The soul will be brought more and more into harmony with the mind of Christ; it will know God increasingly, and be able to enter humbly into the Divine purposes. There is the peace of the nearer Presence of Christ. And, feeding on this inner vision, the souls of the faithful are

ever engaged in that energy of Intercession which derives its efficacy from the merits of Christ's pleading alone, but owes its new fervour to the purification and the increased knowledge of the life of Paradise. There, too, indeed, "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." On that prayerful ministry of the souls at peace with God we can confidently rely. It is a ministry of ever-growing happiness to them, and of surpassing comfort to us in our own daily pilgrimage towards the land of Peace.

In Paradise the soul attains also to true *Peace with self*. Here, at length, through the perfect work of the Holy Spirit, the soul achieves that true adjustment and unifying of all its powers, which the discipline of this life has never been able to effect. The souls whom He has begun to inspire and sanctify here, He wholly fills and leads to perfection there. There, in that world of greater growth, all the latent capacities, all the unfulfilled promises, all the undeveloped faculties, for which the earthly life has not provided means of perfect expression, will receive their consummation. The last rebel impulse of the warring self will be subdued, and all the powers of the soul rejoice in one glad harmony. Gone are the old contradictions, the old inconsistencies and long-drawn struggles for the supremacy of the better self. The Holy Spirit has His unhindered way, and Peace reigns in the soul. This is the Refreshment which

we pray that the souls of the departed may enjoy. And while we pray for their ever-deepening realisation of the Spirit's power, and think of them with open face reflecting the glory of the Lord, we also thank God for the vision which Paradise opens of human capacities led on to perfection, of the brightest promises of human life at length fulfilled, of ideals too high for earth's achievement radiantly attained in that ampler world beyond the veil.

And Paradise also fulfils the ideal of *Peace with man*, the ideal of human Fellowship. That life, as our Lord's example shows, is a social life. Here the full revelation of Christ most happily supersedes the twilight revelation of the future life which the Old Testament Saints possessed. To them death meant both the cessation of active communion with God and the end of all fellowship and intercourse with men ; the life beyond the grave was a flaccid, listless, shadowy existence, where even God was robbed of human praise, and all spiritual activity ceased. Contrast with this the revelation of Christ's welcome to the penitent thief in Paradise and His quickened spiritual ministry to the waiting souls. In that life we shall surely find the gradually progressing development of all our powers of social Fellowship. Not only will there be the joy of recognition and reunion, but there will be the happiness for us, too, of ampler spiritual ministries. Such ministries will be services of Peace. They will bring to the ministering

soul that peace of tireless and unwearied activity which is the very peace of the Divine working. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." "They cease from their *labours*," from all the harassing, toilsome, wearing tasks of which alone this life has experience. But "their *works* do follow them," their spiritual activities continue, being wrought under conditions of perfect tranquillity, harmony, and peace.

The remembrance of this social aspect and spiritual ministry of Paradise helps us in two great perplexities. First, there is the mystery of those many young lives which seem to us so suddenly and unaccountably cut off in the very height of their usefulness and vigour. May it not be that God needs them already for even higher ministry and services of wider influence in the land beyond? May we not trust God to place His workers? Does He not know where each soul can give its most effective aid? And so, if they have been called from our sight, they have gone with the smile of peace already upon their lips; and, with the beauty of that fuller Peace already shining through the veil, they have passed to ampler opportunities of service. And we can best hold ourselves in close communion with them, we can best aid their work and gladden their hearts, not by rebelling against the separation which God's work entails, not by curious and unblest efforts to pierce the veil which God's love has drawn between the activities of this life and the ministry of

souls in Paradise; but by ourselves drawing nearer to God, by a fresh dedication of ourselves here and now to such spiritual service, such earthly ministries of love, as God allows. So shall they that mourn be blessed and find comfort and the peace of God, and prepare themselves most speedily for the happy reunion of Paradise.

Secondly, the expectation of the spiritual ministry that awaits us in Paradise will often explain the meaning of those times of inactivity, which, whether through sickness or increasing age, come to draw the busy worker away from his accustomed and happy sphere of activity in God's service. The loss of the old energetic ministry distresses us. It is so hard to reconcile ourselves to the abandonment of our outdoor work, so hard to be too ill to think consecutively. The failure of powers of memory and thought, the fear of increasing infirmity, cast the shadow of hopelessness over our lives. Then it is, perhaps, for us to remember that God is just withdrawing us for a while from the more outward activities of this life, that we may be brought closer to Himself, called into the very sanctuary of suffering and weakness, in order that our deepest spiritual faculties may be tried, tested, purified, strengthened for that fuller ministry of spiritual help which His love has purposed for us in the life beyond.

C.

Thus the peace of this life points us truly, through the very example of the perfect Man Christ Jesus, to that Peace which is the glory of the future, and we take comfort in the unbroken Fellowship of Paradise. There the barriers which on earth impede the fulness of social fellowship are broken down. Love grows ever more and more. Knowledge deepens, sympathy widens, the hearts of all are drawn together in a new unity of purpose as they bow before the nearer vision of Christ. And souls take on new ministries of spiritual service which transcend the possibilities of earthly fellowship. We realise their fellowship with us. For we believe that Christ the Perfect Man is the ground and source, as of sanctity, so also of fellowship of life. The saintly lives known to God the All-loving are more in number than man conceives, those "unknown good who rest in God's still memory folded deep." We believe that no human good pauses for death, that the forces of goodness stored up in the souls that enjoy the wider life beyond are a growing treasury of everliving power and blessing. The influence of the prayers of the saints departed is the greatest spiritual influence that man can exert. Not only is there an ever-increasing energy of spiritual activity, as soul is added to soul, but each soul goes on in an ever-growing approximation to the perfect holiness

and beauty of Christ's own Life. Into the strong current of that intercession we cast ourselves on earth.

And what if, through the power of Fellowship, by our steadfastness, by our penitence, by our reverent worship and deepening love of God, we may be allowed to add one thrill of joy to the souls of those whom we so dearly love, whose intercessions we prize? All the influences of Paradise call us to penitence, to prayer, to a reassertion in our lives of those ideals which have been so lovingly entrusted to us. We believe, also, that the Altar is the sacred meeting-place of Heaven and Paradise and Earth and that, in the words of S. Cyril, "it will be of the greatest profit to the souls for whom prayer is offered while the Holy and most awful Sacrifice is presented." So straining our eyes towards the land of Paradise, we pray for the souls of our brethren, pleading the Saviour's infinite Merits; and by those Holy Mysteries which vouchsafe His Sacramental Presence we link ourselves afresh to the life of the waiting Church. Thus each Eucharistic offering becomes our most solemn presentation in act of that prayer of crowning simplicity and power, "Jesu mercy."

XII

THE FESTIVAL OF FELLOWSHIP

ALL SAINTS' TIDE

ALL Saints' Tide is the glory of the falling year. It is the Festival of human triumph. It is the Festival of man touched with the glory of God, the Festival of human fellowship, the hallowing of friendship, the vindication of human dignity, the Festival of happy Remembrance and of high Ideals. In the gloom of the fading year it brings to us the certainty of human bliss, and touches the sober hues of autumn life with the glories of the Eternal Spring. It is the Festival that cheers the bereaved and lonely heart with the true sense of lasting companionship. It braces the reluctant, shrinking soul for the hard battle, bringing the gracious memory of past victors, who are present witnesses and living intercessors behind the veil. Like an unseen chorus from behind the heavy curtain of the grave there steals upon us the chant of the holy ones—a human chant, so dear, so thrilling to the awakened ear. Thus the sweet, stirring melodies of Heaven and of Paradise break in upon the duties and anxieties of earth, and we recognise the song of Home as we pass on our

pilgrim way in a strange land. Dearer and dearer each year this Festival grows to us who remain. May it be to us always not only the stirring of the deepest emotions and the hallowing of the tenderest memories, but the dedication of the will to the more devoted service of God, the deepening of faith, and a fuller experience of the joys of that Sacramental Life, in which we have our closest earthly Fellowship with the Departed, and the pledge of our perfect Fellowship with God.

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